SEA JOURNEYS IN ANCIENT GREEK TRAGEDY

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Thesis submitted for the degree of Ph.D.

by

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To my parents

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CONTENTS

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Note on Translation

References to the extant plays of the tragedians and translations of ancient Greek passages are to the following editions:

Aeschylus' *Persians*: Hall, E. (ed.). (1996).

Aeschylus' *Suppliant Women*: Bowen, A.J. (2013).

Euripides' *Andromache*: Lloyd, M. (1994).

Euripides' *Hecuba*: Collard C. (1991).

Euripides' *Helen*: Dale A.M. (1967).

Euripides' *Iphigenia in Tauris*: Cropp (2000).

Euripides' *Trojan Women*: Barlow S.A. (1986).

Sophocles' *Philoctetes*: Ussher R.G. (1990).

Abstract

My field of interest concerns the representation of the sea and its prominent presence as a space with multiple dynamics, symbolism and interpretations in ancient Greek tragedy. Using the wanderings of mortals as a main axis, I will attempt to explore how the sea, as an open dramatic milieu, acquires a significant function, which is directly connected with mortals' destiny. The sea's unpredictable nature is projected as a metaphysical environment, which could be identified as a boundary between the Greeks and the barbarians, life and death, *nostos* and *nostalgia.*

Increasingly, recent scholarship has produced a variety of detailed analyses and considerations concerning the spatial dynamics of tragedy. Although the seascape is recognized as an influential landscape at the centre of the Greek world, only a limited amount of scholarly attention has been devoted to this nautical realm as illustrated in ancient Greek tragedy. The aim of this thesis is to discuss the use and the perception of this powerful and effective space in a selection of tragedies, and to focus on the treatments of the sea as an intersection of multiple connotations and references.

The thesis concludes that within the context of a world in constant turmoil, journeys at sea can be interpreted as illustrating and revealing, through the adventures and aspirations of mortals, the socio-political and historical framework of the Greek society contemporary with the tragedies. The poetic image of the sea, as expressed in the tragic texts and connected with the capability of the human imagination to re-create a personal vision of history and myth, forms a remarkable topographic environment full of instability which, in many cases, depicts humanity's ambivalent emotions and uncertain future.

Introduction

Journeys in the sea…Journeys in life… Every man is a sailor travelling in time. His life is an adventure of departures and arrivals, victories and disasters, calm waters and storms. In ancient Greek tragedy, human's trajectories are at the mercy of divine powers and natural forces; but most and above all, they are at the mercy of their own destiny (*μοίρα*). Man, struggling with divinities (*δαίμονες*), Furies (*Ἐρινύες*), and the all-tamer time (*πανδαμάτωρ χρόνος*), fights to escape his predicted fate. His wanderings in a sea of despair, metaphorically, illustrate the pursuit of a desired eternity within the limits of his mortal life. Ancient Greek tragedy enquires into the endless agony and the fatal decisions of humans in the face of life's dilemmas, exploring how the characters who suffer are the dramatic representation of 'ourselves' through the image of the mythic, ethnic, gendered and faraway 'others'.[1]

A doctoral dissertation is an intellectual journey on uncharted paths based on the experience and the expertise of previous explorers, but, like a play written for the theatrical stage, it should be confined within the limits of space and time. The main inspiration behind this thesis is to explore, through a selection of ancient Greek tragedies, the dramatic representations of the emblematic and poetic image of the sea as a background setting in theatre and life. The aim of this thesis is to elucidate the dynamic role of the sea and its multi-dimensional symbolisms within the framework of the theatrical text but beyond the limits of a theoretical interpretation. The theatrical text embodies various potential 'readings' and representations, 'awaiting' its performance in order to be completed as a work of art. My intention is to examine succinctly the

[1] For the images of the ethnically 'other' as a way of ethnic self-definition see Hall (1989, 97-100) and

multiple aspects of the sea as a dramatic milieu of heroes and chorus' wanderings with respect to the performance as a means by which the text is realized.

The source material of this study consists of a selection of plays and not the whole corpus of the extant Greek tragedies, although the role of the sea, mainly through its poetic illustrations in the choral songs and the characters' narration, is prevalent in many of them. Nevertheless, I draw attention to specific tragedies in which, in a surprisingly coherent and integrated manner, the sea plays a leading role and preserves a complex dynamic function in the evolution of the plot providing a repeated pattern of departures and arrivals.

Although recent scholarship has produced an enormous amount of critical literature with a variety of detailed analyses concerning the spatial dynamics of ancient Greek tragedy, only a limited amount of scholarly attention has been devoted to the sea as a prominent dramatic environment, and as an open field of mortal wanderings. In terms of imagery, a solid theoretical background is provided and this can be employed to calibrate the scope for further speculation and reflection. However, it is sufficiently discernible that despite the significant function of the sea as mean of transportations, separations and reunions, only slight and sporadic critical literature has been attempted. Throughout this thesis I try to discuss the use and the perception of this aquatic locus and to draw attention to the treatment of the sea as an intersection of multiple connotations and references.

This thesis consists of four chapters, in which the sea and its close connection with mortals' adventures, desires, and sufferings, are discussed. In Chapter I a detailed

analysis is provided concerning the sea as a locus of death in Aeschylus' *Persians*. The sea as a dominant dramatic space haunts the play establishing a metaphor for both the vastness of the Persian army and its total destruction. The aqueous landscapes of Salamis and Strymon assume the features of fatal destinations and become synonyms of death itself. Moreover, attention is paid to the crossing of Hellespont as an arrogant act of *hubris*, which set in motion forces of revenge, as well as to the Necromancy of the king, Darius, as an indirect invocation of the 'departed' Persians from the depth of Hades.

Chapter II focuses on the role of the seashore as a topographic and symbolic border between sea and land, past and future, freedom and exile in Euripides' *Hecuba* and *Trojan Women*. In an attempt to elucidate the semantic function of the seashore as liminal off-stage space, the analysis is based on different themes such as the examination of the metaphysical dimension of the prologue speeches in both tragedies, the Trojan women's journey to exile as a symbolic rite of passage, the nautical imagery throughout the plays, and, finally, the watery grave of Cynossema as a memory space and a warning landmark for sailors.

Exposed in their physical and biological permeability, human beings are perpetual suppliants of asylum-seeking to ensure, though temporarily, the fulfilment of a desire to enjoy a painless and harmonious life. Chapter III aims to investigate the relations between sea, sanctuary and salvation. In Aeschylus' *Suppliants* I ask how the sea is connected with the motif of asylum-seeking, and how as a significant domain it specifies the borders and links to distant lands. Also, light is shed on the image of the god's statues as 'silent' but present divinities in the play's setting, while the final part of

this section discusses the portrayal of the Danaids as water nymphs of Argos and their dynamic representation from helpless maidens to skilful manipulators. In Euripides' *Andromache* special attention is given to Thetis' monument as a convenient dramatic device capable of expressing her unifying role, literally and symbolically, through the prism of her arrival at the end of the play. The broader aquatic dramatic locus which Euripides creates, and the identification of Achilles as an immortal islander are also explored. The third section of this chapter is devoted to exploring how in Euripides' *Iphigenia in Tauris* the idea of salvation is inextricably connected with the image of the sea. Furthermore, it provides an examination of the poetry of sounds, particularly those derived from the sea, and draws attention to the symbolic dimensions of the colourful images and the holy droplets within the play. The final section of the third chapter deals with the sea journeys in Euripides' *Helen*, the role of islands as spaces, which are closely connected with the character's identity and destiny, the presence of the wanderer sailors Teucer and Menelaus as a hope of relief from heroes' sufferings, the tomb of Peleus as an imaginary space of protection, and finally Helen's sea voyage return as a poetic transportation to immortality.

The final part of this thesis surveys how the scenic space of the ancient Greek theatre at the centre of *polis* is identified as an isolated island, and considers how this dramatically remote territory illustrates the loneliness and despair of an abandoned mortal who is exposed to the savagery of nature. The uninhabited island in Sophocles' *Philoctetes* offers an arena for the portrayal of a mortal's regression to primitivism during and as a result of war. The island of Lemnos becomes an inhospitable landscape for Philoctetes' sufferings and the sea becomes a borderland zone of isolation and despair.

Although the sea keeps places separate in a world where different lands are spatially distinct, humans' aspiration to explore uncharted paths of knowledge leads them to travel beyond the limits of their own world. For the ancient Greeks the close reliance on the sea was a constant spring of inspiration, which offers them an open field of experimentations, the presuppositions of maritime colonization, and the profound sense of freedom, physically and intellectually. In ancient Greek tragedy, the sea preserves its prevalent role in heroes' adventures, and in choruses' lyric odes. In the audiences' imagination, sailing mends together what nature has kept apart, and the theatrical stage becomes a visible space of arrivals after long lasting voyages, and the locus of, enforced or voluntary, imminent departures.

Chapter 1

The Sea as a space of Death in Aeschylus' *Persians*

1.1 Introduction

In Aeschylus' *Persians* the topographic distance between Greece and Persia is dramatically bridged. The physical theatrical space itself, where the play is performed, embodies the symbolic image of the yoke which functions as a recurrent motif that closes the distance between the Hellenes and barbarians. The theatre of Dionysus Eleuthereus in Athens was transformed into a space containing a *plethora* of symbols of the 'other', which are presented in the familiar, everyday environment visible to the audience who sat on the south slope of the Athenian Acropolis, not many miles away from Mount Aigaleo where Xerxes, as another spectator, once 'had a seat with a clear view of the whole militia' (*ἕδραν γὰρ εἶχε παντὸς εὐαγῆ στρατοῦ*, *Persians 466*).[2] In this charged place, the audience listen to the woes and paeans of the play as a representation of their own history.

In this chapter, I analyse the text of *Persians* in order to examine how it presents the theme of the sea. After setting the play in its historical context, I briefly review a selection of what seems to be the most important of the different interpretations of the function of the sea in the play by other scholars, before presenting my own analysis. This analysis argues that Aeschylus meaningfully opts to use various forms of aqueous landscapes as the dominant dramatic space to establish a metaphor for both the vastness of the Persian army's glory and its devastation. Furthermore, in the *Persians* these

[2] For other ancient sources referring to the seat on which Xerxes sat to witness the battle of Salamis, see Thompson (1965, 285-7).

aqueous landscapes assume the features of fatal destinations, becoming a synonym for death itself.

In order to demonstrate this, I analyse the imagery and diction of the play from a series of six perspectives - the sea as a space of death; the image of the Hellespont and its hubristic bridging; the invisible 'chorus' of dead Persians in the waters beside Salamis; the river Strymon's 'revenge'; the link between the maritime imagery and the theme of death and despair, as well as the connection between the theme of burial and relationships with the dead, buried and unburied, which is highlighted in the necromancy of the dead god-king Darius.

1.2 Historical Context

Aeschylus lived in a turbulent era when political life was dominated by depositions, oppressive regimes as well as democratic reforms, upheavals and, crucially, imperialism. The political and military abilities of the Athenian hegemony were inextricably connected not only with the perennial pre-eminence of the combatants in the fields of the war, but also with the maritime prowess and the navigational skills of these expert seafarers. Furthermore, the sea played a crucial role by providing the Greeks with natural resources and offered them an effective mode of transportation facilitating the evolution of trade and the inauguration of colonies. Hence, we should bear in mind not only the function of the sea as a key milieu in the Greek imagination and thought, but as a space directly related to the effort of the Athenians to dominate others, through their 'democratic' imperialism over the Hellenes and barbarians, in order to strengthen their own identity and superiority over enemies as well as allies.

The steady rise of the Achaemenid dynasty in Persia,[3] since its founding by Cyrus the Great during the second half of the 6th century B.C., culminated in the reign of Darius I (521-486 B.C), who managed to significantly augment the empire's territories. The intensification of Persian influence was felt as a constant and growing threat by the neighbouring Greek states.

Numerous attempts to thwart the Persian presence in the coastal areas of Asia Minor were undertaken by the Greek cities of Ionia, often with the assistance of their allies from the nearby islands and mainland Greece. These reached a climax during the Ionian revolt, which took place during the decade of 490 B.C. The unsuccessful outcome of this revolt eventually enabled Persian plans for a decisive retaliatory strike, in order to impose Persian rule on the maverick Greek states. The ulterior aim of the Great King was not only to quench any remaining resistance in Asia Minor but also to extend further westwards bringing mainland Greece under his rule and thus subjugating the cities that instigated and supported the Ionian rebellions.[4] In the years that ensued, many of the Ionians' original allies abandoned them to their fate. In an act designed to serve as an example to all, Miletus was captured and its entire population was either slaughtered or sold into slavery.[5]

In the meantime, the Athenian general Themistocles oversaw the undertaking of extensive military preparations that focused on the construction of a considerable fleet

[3] For the rise and establishment of Achaemenid Empire, see Cook (1985, 200-291).
[4] Nagle-Burstein (2007, 78) mention that 'after the victory over the Ionian Greeks, the Persians launched an expedition to punish those from the mainland of Greece who had helped in the revolt, namely the Athenians and Eretrians on the nearby island of Euboea'.
[5] Phrynichus' tragedy *Sack of Miletus* was composed shortly after the conquest of Miletus by the Persians during the Ionian revolt. The play, emphasizing Athens' abandonment of its colonies, was regarded with disapproval by the Athenians, and Phrynichus was fined for 'reminding them of their domestic misfortunes' (*ἀναμνήσαντα οἰκήια κακὰ*, Herodotus 6.21.2).

of Triremes. This was funded by diverting the surpluses from the rent of the mines at Laureion, which were otherwise ordinarily distributed among citizens.[6]

After the victorious naval battles at Salamis and Mycale, in 480 and 478/7 respectively, Athens led the institution of the Delian League, which was originally meant to act as a bastion against future barbarian aggression; but which, in fact, rapidly developed into the cornerstone of Athenian supremacy. Although the Sparta-led Peloponnesian League's military superiority on land was instrumental in the final victory against the remaining Persian forces at Plataiai in 479, Athens grabbed the opportunity to establish influence among the Greek states, based, primarily, on its naval dominance.[7]

It is of great interest to note, here, how theatre with its dynamic transformations and multiple levels of symbolism manages to explore the relationship between myth and history. In ancient Greek tragedy, images of myth and historical facts are merged through narration. Indeed, the medium of dramatic illusion reflects socio-political issues, religious beliefs, and ethical laws. Particularly, the theatrical stage is transformed into a space between historical reality, mythic tradition, and metaphysical *cosmos,* where faraway spaces become, through the engagement of the audience's imagination, images fused with memory and fantasy. For the Athenians Salamis was a familiar landscape. In conjunction with historical facts that were recent in the memory of Aeschylus' contemporary audience, the sea was a 'visible' natural background setting, a sacred space with its own gods, and the great host of drowned seamen.

[6] Herodotus 7.144.1; Thucydides 6.91.7; Aristotle's *Athenian Constitution* 22.7.
[7] Herodotus' *Histories* contains a great deal of information about the Persian expedition against Greece. For further analysis see Bengtson (1968, 47-68), Nagle-Burstein (2007, 67-97).

1.3 Previous Interpretations of the Theme of the Sea in *Persians*

An enormous amount of critical literature deals with issues and themes concerning the sea in the classical Greek world. It is important to make note of certain scholars whose work specializes in fields of particular interest. Vryonis[8] and Wallinga[9] have concerned themselves with the relationship between the Greeks and the sea, while Morrison/Coats/Rankov [10] analysed the development and ascendancy of Greek navigation, fleets and naval enterprise in the ancient world.

In Aeschylus' *Persians,* both the sea and the icy waters of the river Strymon are given a key role in the dramatic development of the play. Thus, the element of water assumes primary importance due to its significance in terms of imagery. It is for this precise reason that a substantial volume of commentary exists which focuses specifically on the functionality of the watery element in this historical tragedy. We can draw from a plethora of bibliographic references, apt interpretations and interesting speculations on the subject, contained within the mass of commentary, which has been offered to us by the many scholars who have concerned themselves keenly and consistently with the *Persians* in particular.

Thus, a solid theoretical ground is provided by the approaches of Hall, Broadhead, Podlecki, Garvie and Rosenbloom;[11] and this can be employed to calibrate the scope for further speculation and reflection. It is perhaps noteworthy to mention, among others, the approaches of Anderson on the recurrent imageries in the play,[12] those of Stanford with regard to his study of Aeschylean style,[13] Hall's provocative

[8] Vryonis (1993).
[9] Wallinga (1993).
[10] Morrison, Coates, Rankov (2000).
[11] Hall (1996), Broadhead (1960), Podlecki (1970), Garvie (2009), Rosenbloom (2006).
[12] Anderson (1972).
[13] Stanford (1942).

deposition on the effeminisation of Persia,[14] Taplin's exploration of the relation between text and stage action,[15] and also Lindenlauf's treatise on the sea as a permanent disposal territory or 'away place'.[16]

Furthermore, a number of studies and references have investigated the association between the loss of human souls at sea and the notion of death by water and the incidents of Salamis and the river Strymon.[17] However, it is sufficiently discernible that no linkage between the concepts of the sea as a morbid locus of death and as an actual cause of the destruction and abandonment of the almighty Persian Empire has been attempted in the critical literature to date. My research, therefore, will attempt to investigate those dramaturgic parameters that display the sea's quality as a 'faraway' dramatic realm, and at the same time associate it to the fear of the unknown, the longing related to absence, and finally the metaphysical dimension of death.[18]

1.4 The aquatic reflections in Aeschylus' *Persians*

The sea as a prominent environment in the Greek topographic imagination becomes a symbolic space with various interpretations and a naturalistic landscape with multiple metaphysical, mythical and poetic dimensions. In many Greek literary texts, the pivotal role of the seascape, as a dramatic setting of the chorus and the character's songs and narrations, reflects the strong and close connection between the Greeks and the sea. In this chapter I argue that the unpredictable and changeable waters of the sea create a mysterious atmosphere in Aeschylus' *Persians*, functioning as an arena of wanderings,

[14] Hall (1989, 1996).
[15] Taplin (1977).
[16] Lindenlauf (2004).
[17] Hall (1994) and Lincoln (2000).
[18] For the prominent and recurrent motif of fear and its political overtones in Aeschylus' *Persians* see Kantzios (2004).

a physical boundary between hostile lands, and a '*nostos*' passage. Furthermore, the sea is identified as a place that hosts in its deep waters, shipwrecks, divine gods, and dead sailors. More specifically, I focus on the more significant patterns, which Aeschylus utilizes in *Persians*, projecting the aquatic landscapes as a familiar 'other' and an intimate picture of death in the spectators' imagination.

1.4.1 The imagery of the Sea as a space of death in Aeschylus' *Persians.*

Aeschylus builds a barbarian scenic space in the centre of the theatre, a cultural mirror of political, social and economical life in democratic Athens. Making use of the secure ritual framework of Greek tragedy, Aeschylus incorporates the reality of historical facts and daily life within the dramatic field. Thus, he creates the appropriate conditions under which the Athenians, through the image of the defeated Persians, could explore themselves, their historical responsibilities, and the need for respect towards human life.

Aeschylus in *Persians* seeks to give a recognizable dramatic space to his audience using the sea as a natural environment and mentioning familiar locations and historic sites imbued with memories and vivid emotions. Places of triumphant battles function simultaneously as sacred tombs of death. The island of Salamis, in particular, is placed in the spotlight of the plot as a region, which is haunted by violent rivalries and unburied corpses.[19] The Messenger's speech, forming a part of the longest messenger scene in extant Greek tragedy,[20] is structured using complex images associated with the shores of Salamis and the nearby regions, as a fatal destination for the Persian navy:

[19] The island of Salamis is the largest island in the Saronic Gulf. It is located less than a mile from the mainland and about ten miles west of the Athenian Acropolis.
[20] Hall (1996, 128).

πλήθουσι νεκρῶν δυσπότμως ἐφθαρμένων

Σαλαμῖνος ἀκταὶ πᾶς τε πρόσχωρος τόπος.

The shores of Salamis and all the neighbouring regions are

filled up with the corpses of those who met unhappy deaths.

(*Persians* 272-3)

In many cases synonymous expressions are identified with the island of Salamis as a locus that hosts the smashed corpses of the barbaric generals:

Ἀρτεμβάρης δὲ μυρίας ἵππου βραβεὺς

στύφλους παρ' ἀκτὰς θείνεται Σιληνιῶν.

Artembares, the commander of ten thousand horsemen,

is being smashed along the rough shores of Salamis

(*Persians* 302-3)

Furthermore, other poetic variations are present in order to identify the Greek Salamis:

Τενάγων τ' ἀριστεὺς Βακτρίων ἰθαιγενὴς

θαλασσόπληκτον νῆσον Αἴαντος πολεῖ

High-born Tenagon of the Bactrians' most ancient lineage

haunts the wave-beaten island of Ajax

(*Persians* 306-7)

The broader geographic map of the naval battle is dramatically sketched with references to Psytalleia, a nearby island of Salamis:[21]

νῆσός τις ἔστι πρόσθε Σαλαμῖνος τόπων,
βαιά, δύσορμος ναυσίν, ἣν ὁ φιλόχορος
Πὰν ἐμβατεύει, ποντίας ἀκτῆς ἔπι.

There is an island in front of Salamis,
small and difficult for the ships to anchor in,
where dance-loving Pan treads the seashores

(*Persians* 447-9)

The Greeks manage to deceive their enemy in order to secure victory by leading the opposing fleet into a deadly trap, like fish led to a net.[22] The net, a fisherman's key tool, acquires in *Persians* a symbolic status as an image of revenge due to an act of *hubris*:[23]

τοὶ δ' ὥστε θύννους ἤ τιν' ἰχθύων βόλον
ἀγαῖσι κωπῶν θραύμασίν τ' ἐρειπίων
ἔπαιον, ἐρράχιζον

But they kept on striking and splicing us with broken oars and
fragments of the wreckage as if we were tunny or a catch of fish

[21] For scholars' interpretations of the reference to Psytalleia and the difference in the accounts of Aeschylus and Herodotus see Kyriakou (2011, 27 n.24).
[22] According to Hall (1996, 140) 'the simile is particularly apposite because the fish were killed by being stuck on the head in their nets with clubs while still at sea, as the Greeks struck the encircled Persians.'
[23] *Hubris*, as Dodds (1951, 31), epigrammatically suggests is 'arrogance in word or deed or even though'. For Xerxes' *hubris* in Aeschylus *Persians* see Conacher (1974, 164), Fischer (1992, 256-263), Hall (1996, 163) Papadimitropoulos (2008, 451-8).

(*Persians* 424-6)

The waters of Salamis become a synecdoche for the destruction of the Persians and the central point of the dramatic structure of the play. The narrow straits acquire a clearly defined imagery as a passage of death, a place of no escape and an absolute 'other':[24]

> *Ἑλληνικαί τε νῆες οὐκ ἀφρασμόνως*
> *κύκλῳ πέριξ ἔθεινον, ὑπτιοῦτο δὲ*
> *σκάφη νεῶν, θάλασσα δ' οὐκέτ' ἦν ἰδεῖν ,*
> *ναυαγίων πλήθουσα καὶ φόνου βροτῶν.*
> *ἀκταὶ δὲ νεκρῶν χοιράδες τ' ἐπλήθυον*
>
> Greek ships judiciously encircled them and made their strike and ships' hulls were turned upside down. And it was no longer possible to glimpse the sea, which was brimming with wrecked ships and dead men.
>
> (*Persians* 417-21)

The narrative is defined by a number of expressions, all of which concern Salamis and the sea as a host of defeated and drowned seamen. The messenger's speech illustrates this through a poetic description of the image of the drowning barbarians. The chorus repeats in a more detailed way the image of the dead bodies as 'tossed, drenched and carried along by the sea, their cloaks wandering around them' (*ἁλίδονα μέλεα πολυβαφῆ/ κατθανόντα λέγεις φέρεσθαι/ πλάγκτ' ἐν διπλάκεσσιν*, *Persians* 275-7). The space of the sea as a watery grave for the unburied bodies, contrasts with the desolated

[24] Rehm (2002, 243) states that 'death is a place from which there is no escape, for anyone…a final destination for all'. Vernant (1991, 205) defines death as 'an absolute other'.

Persian city (*kenandron, Persians* 119). This, in turn, reflects in our minds the disastrous return voyage of the Argives in Aeschylus' *Agamemnon*:

> *ναῦς γὰρ πρὸς ἀλλήλαισι Θρῄκιαι πνοαὶ*
> *ἤρεικον: αἱ δὲ κεροτυπούμεναι βίᾳ*
> *χειμῶνι τυφῷ σὺν ζάλῃ τ' ὀμβροκτύπῳ*
> *ᾤχοντ' ἄφαντοι ποιμένος κακοῦ στρόβῳ.*
> *ἐπεὶ δ' ἀνῆλθε λαμπρὸν ἡλίου φάος,*
> *ὁρῶμεν ἀνθοῦν πέλαγος Αἰγαῖον νεκροῖς*
> *ἀνδρῶν Ἀχαιῶν ναυτικοῖς τ' ἐρειπίοις.*
>
> Beneath blasts from Thrace ship dashed against ship; and they, gored violently by the furious hurricane and rush of pelting rain, were swept out of sight by the whirling gust of an evil shepherd. But when the radiant light of the sun rose we beheld the Aegean flowering with corpses of Achaean men and wreckage of ships
>
> (Aeschylus' *Agamemnon* 654-660)

These narrations not only convey the power of the dominant emotion of loss, but may also express a dramatic reflection of the audience's eye-witness experience when they earlier participated in many military expeditions.

Among the many interesting metaphorical associations between sea and death, *Persians* displays the indomitable nature of this ambiguous space in this manner: 'A sea-wave is invincible' (*ἄμαχον κῦμα θαλάσσας*, *Persians* 90). But even though 'the

irresistible Persian army' (*ἀπρόσοιστος γὰρ ὁ Περσᾶν/ στρατὸς, Persians* 91) is depicted as an untamed wave and a 'huge flood of men' (*μεγάλῳ ῥεύματι φωτῶν, Persians* 87), the image very soon is inverted.[25] The sea's power and boundlessness transforms into a 'vast ocean of catastrophes' (*κακῶν δὴ πέλαγος ἔρρωγεν μέγα, Persians* 433) breaking upon the Persians and evoking their total destruction.

Although Homer talked about the division of power between Zeus, Poseidon and Hades, with Poseidon taking hold of the realm of the sea,[26] we could detect in the text of *Persians* frequent references to the correlation between the darkness of Hades and the abyss of the sea. In this 'depth of disaster' (*κακῶν ὁρῶν βάθος, Persians* 465) Xerxes is the only survivor, but the power of waves washes up the dead corpses of soldiers onto the shores of Salamis and sends their 'departed' souls to Hades, a distinct realm crowded with Persian slain:

> *γᾶ δ' αἰάζει τὰνἐγγαίαν*
> *ἥβαν Ξέρξᾳ κταμέναν Ἅιδου*
> *σάκτορι Περσᾶν. Αγβατάνων γὰρ*
>
> Each laments the youth of the young men she bore, killed by
> Xerxes, who has crammed Hades with Persians.
>
> (*Persians* 922-4)

[25] See Susanne Said, 'Tragedy and Reversal: The example of the Persians' in Lloyd (2007, 71-93).
[26] Homer *Il.* 15.189-93.

Hades - the Underworld - like the sea, is a silent environment without voices or sounds. Dead soldiers are like fish, children of silence, ever moving on a journey without destination:

> *κναπτόμενοι δ' ἁλὶ δεινά,*
> *σκύλλονται πρὸς ἀναύδων,*
> *παίδων τᾶς ἀμιάντου,*
>
> Lacerated terrible by the brine, they are mangled by the voiceless children of the undefiled sea
>
> (*Persians* 576-8)

The silence is not only a boundary between the human and the divine,[27] but also could be seen as the representation of death, the voice of oblivion (*lethe*) and the expression of absence.[28] The sea has the ability to deprive humans of their burial. In this case, corpses become components of the *cosmos* of the sea,[29] like tunny or a catch of fish (*Persians* 425). The net as a recurrent image is suggested as a tool of deception in Aeschylus' dramaturgy.

In the messenger's speech, the Persian army is finally trapped by the Greeks' deceitful nets and is 'tossed against the shores of Greece…by the sea's elemental power'.[30] The dominance of the sea is confirmed with the scattered corpses and the

[27] For Petre (as cited in Macintosh 1994, 134) 'the silence is a way of conveying the ineffable, the axis between human and divine'.
[28] Macintosh (1994, 164) suggests that 'silence may be considered as another illustration of, even acknowledgment of, the anonymity of death'.
[29] Lindenlauf (2004, 421).
[30] Anderson (1972, 172).

wrecks around Salamis. The actual wave becomes the milieu of destruction in the flooding of the Persian royal army leading its ships to a non-return journey to the Underworld.

The image of the ship in ancient Greek tragedy reflects not only the ability of humans to transport goods, hopes, desire, and revenge via the sea, but also to conquer and familiarize the unknown faraway spaces, literally or symbolically. Geographical localities link the distant mythical world with the immediate past of the audience or their contemporary events. Recurring images of distant territories could be encoded as significant symbols of victory or defeat, alliance or hostility, hospitable communities or impassable spaces. If Salamis, according to the ancient Greeks' ethical cycle, represents a space of punishment (*tisis*) for the Persians, the Hellespont is a striking example that illustrates a 'faraway' space where mortals are trapped in the nets of *hubris*.

1.4.2 The haunted Hellespont – A passage of *hubris*.

The imaginary world of most Greek storytelling, with its common themes of man's pursuit of his identity, is usually chronologically set in a distant past imagined centuries before, in the late Bronze Age. Here, the wealth of legendary figures and genealogical rivalries creates the backdrop for the emergence of specific dominant characters and families. Greek writers can be seen as acting in continuity with tradition but at the same time they offer their own, personal interpretation of the myth.

Aeschylus' *Persians* stands out as the only surviving tragedy, which deals with a known historical event, namely the defeat of the Great King Xerxes' army at Salamis. In fact, Aeschylus illustrates, here, a historical part of his own life. He witnessed the

political upheaval of the time, as well as the threat of an imminent invasion by the mighty Persian army. Furthermore, the experience of the savagery of the battlefield left an indelible mark on him due to the loss of his brother (amongst others) as a result of a wound received at the Battle of Marathon.[31] Aeschylus therefore alters the traditional mythical landscape into a historical one, which is interwoven with his subjective perspective. This landscape is, hence, used to outline the story of man's arrogance leading to his own decline.

In this plot, specific place-names are used, each with its own story to tell. Hellespontos, the Gulf of Helle, is the location of the story of a young girl whose freedom costs her death at sea en route to the Black Sea and the Crimea. The vengeance of her stepmother Ino leads Nephele, Athamas' first wife and natural mother of Helle and Phrixus, to save her children from being sacrificed. She plans a rescue journey across the sea by sending a golden ram to carry them away to Colchis, but only Phrixus survives.[32] Helle falls off and is lost in the dark waters of the Gulf between Europe and Asia.[33]

The death of Helle, which takes place near the Black Sea, may be seen as a symbolic equivalent of an unsuccessful rite of passage. Helle's transition, apparently, is interrupted by her fatal fall.[34] Nevertheless, the image of the dead virgin's body in the waters of the inhospitable sea brings together nature's wildness and the pure, primitive essence of adolescence. The myth of Helle compares and contrasts easily with that of

[31] Herodotus 6.114.
[32] It is interesting to note that Ino, later in the myth, becomes herself victim of intense jealously. Ino causes Hera's wrath when she raises her nephew Dionysus, son of her sister Semele. Hera strikes Athamas with insanity. Ino, trying to escape the pursuit of her frenzied husband, throws herself and her son Melicertes into the sea. They are both afterwards worshipped as marine divinities; Ino as Leucothea and Melicertes as Palaemon. Euripides' *Medea* 1282-1290, Apollodorus 1.9.1-3, Ovid 4.416-542.
[33] Buxton (2004, 108-9).
[34] Arnold van Gennep in his seminal book *Les Rites de Passage* (*The Rites of Passage*), published in 1909, analyses the initiatory rites as a procedure of individual's status transition and suggests its tripartite classification– rites of separation, transition rites, and rites of incorporation.

Iphigenia, the young daughter of Agamemnon led to sacrifice in order to fulfil the oracle and allow the Greek ships to sail to Troy. Like Iphigenia at Aulis, Helle was the victim of an oracle, which demanded the sacrifice of both herself and her brother Phrixus.[35] As in *Iphigenia*, an animal that is aided by a god (in this case Hermes) interferes with the sacrificial rite, carrying them both to salvation.

However, Helle finds no haven in the barbaric land to welcome her as a priestess. Iphigenia is given charge of the homicidal sacrifices that take place at the sanctuary of Artemis in Tauris, which she unwillingly accepts as the wish of her divine saviour. Having avoided captivity at the hands of her father the king Athamas and his mistress Ino, Helle returns to her mother Nephele's physical environment, the sea. A metaphysical reunion is implied, in which the Oceanid Nephele once again embraces her beloved daughter.

Helle thus avoids a life in a foreign land but her spirit forever wanders in the waters of the Black Sea, 'named after her fall into the famous straits as the Hellespont'.[36] The Hellespont becomes a holy space and hosts the symbolic grave of the young maiden Helle. The aspiration of the masculine to dominate a domain devoted to a celibate dead girl, turns this unnatural bond into an act of symbolic sexual rape and as a result into a morbid passage of imminent destruction. The sacred Hellespont can be seen as a place which mortals are prohibited to trespass building bridges. Xerxes' youthful arrogant mind (*ὑπερκόμπων ἄγαν* φρονημάτων, *Persians* 827-8) converts the marching

[35] M.J. Cropp (2000, 55): 'Iphigenia herself is a mock-bride reflecting the pattern of the cult-myths in which an angered goddess demands the death of a girl approaching marriage… In her suspended maidenhood Iphigenia first faces an aberrant human sacrifice in a long-ago Greek realm, then lives in far-away barbarian realm where such sacrifices are normal, and finally returns to become associated with an altered Greek realm which recognizes human sacrifice only in symbols, and where Artemis has chosen to preside over an orderly construction of female lives'.
[36] Hall (1996, 114).

of his gold-bedecked army (*πολυχρύσου στρατιᾶς*, *Persians* 9) into a symbolic funeral procession.

Passages in Greek tragedy have their own symbolic meanings as pathways between life and death, fortune and misfortune, wealth and destruction. Certain images mark the excessive desire of humans to surpass their limits and attain that point which their own nature makes it impossible for them to reach. Such images include adventurous sea voyages, arrogant walks on sacred carpets, deceitful plans for a victorious escape, or symbolic rites of passage. Particularly in Aeschylus' *Persians*, the mighty army, following Xerxes' imperialistic ambitions, marches against Greece, building bridges of *hubris* taming the sacred sea. The Hellespont is, in this sense, a focal point in *Persians*. The violation of nature's law becomes the central reason for multiple forms of revenge.

In Aeschylus' *Persians,* geographic realms constitute a world of imagination where, as already mentioned, the remote dramatic space illustrates the interplay between symbols and facts, history and myth. If any place in this tragedy is closely related to the act of *hubris*, then this is clearly the Hellespont. In this distant territory, the violation of nature by Xerxes' frivolous decision to 'alter the very nature of the strait, and by casting around it hammered shackles furnish a great road for his great army' (*πόρον μετερρύθμιζε, καὶ πέδαισφυρηλάτοις/ περιβαλὼν πολλὴν κέλευθον ἤνυσεν πολλῷ στρατῷ, Persians* 745-8) is the beginning of a series of events leading the huge flood of Persian men down the path of arrogance and to their destruction.

The Hellespont, like a uterus of *hubris* that gives birth to *ate,* the spirit of destructive delusion, would have prompted the audience to recall epic imagery. In the Queen's dream, two beautifully dressed women seemed to appear to her, 'one decked

out in Persian robes, the other in Doric clothing' (*ἡ μὲν πέπλοισι Περσικοῖς ἠσκημένη, / ἡ δ' αὖτε Δωρικοῖσιν, εἰς ὄψιν μολεῖν*, *Persians* 181-3). These two feminine figures, sisters of one race (*κασιγνήτα γένους ταὐτοῦ*, *Persians* 185-6), apparently, represent Persia and Greece, and both of them are subdued by the young king Xerxes. The aged Queen reports the violent and despotic behaviour of her son, evoking a poetic image of political subjection to Persians' imperial power:

> *παῖς δ' ἐμὸς μαθὼν*
>
> *κατεῖχε κἀπράυνεν, ἅρμασιν δ' ὕπο*
>
> *ζεύγνυσιν αὑτῷ καὶ λέπαδν' ἐπ' αὐχένων*
>
> *τίθησι.*
>
> When my son found out about it he tried to restrain and mollify them:
> he harnessed them both beneath his chariot and put a yoke-strap
> beneath their necks.

(*Persians* 189-192)

But one of them, Greece, refuses to be restrained and mollified by Xerxes (*Persians* 190). The Doric figure that smashes the shackles of slavery embodies freedom from the yoke that imperialism wishes to impose.

The act of submission, enforced by the masculine on the feminine, is directly connected to the yoke enforced on the neck of the sea at the narrow straits of Hellespont:[37]

> *πολύγομφον ὅδισμα ζυγὸν ἀμφιβαλὼν αὐχένι πόντου*

[37] Devereux (1976,11) suggests that the rape of the 'undefiled' (*ἀμιάντου*, *Persians* 578) sea as a maternal symbol, 'almost certainly be viewed as the son's symbolic sexual defilement of his mother'.

yoking the neck of the sea with a roadway bolted together

(*Persians* 71)

Taking into account the strong interconnection between the Greeks and the sea, it may be noted that this woman could also personify the sea and its prominent role in the final victory by the Greeks. The woman in the Doric robe 'struggled, tore the harness from the chariot with her hands, dragged it violently along without the bridle, and smashed the yoke in the middle' (*ἡ δ' ἐσφάδαζε, καὶ χεροῖν ἔντη δίφρου / διασπαράσσει καὶ ξυναρπάζει βίᾳ/ ἄνευ χαλινῶν καὶ ζυγὸν θραύει μέσον*, *Persians* 194-6). The breaking of the yoke may be seen as nature's refusal to be harnessed by the Persian King. The sea destroys the vain ambitions of a mortal king. Both Greece and the sea shattered the yoke without any desire to undergo an irrational submission.

The use of the ancient Greek word *αὐχένων (αὐχήν)*, which means neck, is perhaps not incidental, as it is etymologically related to the word *αὐχή,* which means arrogance. It is therefore possible to construe a hypothesis explaining an act of violence as the cause of an act of arrogance. This violent submission and the crossing of the narrow straits, used as a female metaphor, may be interpreted as signifying an unwilling sexual act, a *hubris* that leads to the final catastrophe at the end of the play. This contrasts sharply with the desirable yoke of marriage, which is forcefully and definitively devastated by the previous violent acts of Xerxes' 'youthful audacity' (*νέῳ θράσει, Persians* 744). In this antistrophe, the elders of the chorus evoke the loneliness of Persian women:

λέκτρα δ' ἀνδρῶν πόθῳ πίμπλαται δακρύμασιν:

Περσίδες δ' ἀβροπενθεῖς ἑκάστα πόθῳ φιλάνορι

τὸν αἰχμάεντα θοῦρον εὐνατῆρ' ἀποπεμψαμένα

λείπεται μονόζυξ.

Marriage-beds are overflowing with the tears of yearning husbands

ever softly-grieving Persian woman who has sent forth

her raging warrior husband is left alone under the marriage yoke

(*Persians* 134-7)

The embracing of two continents as a result of the technological and engineering expertise of the Persians is interpreted as a shameful bridge able to rouse the wrath of demons and gods. This unnatural union, caused by man's violation of nature, brings the separation of lovers and the inability of the Persian women to give birth as the 'land of Asia emptied out of its men' (*γαῖ' Ἀσιὰς ἐκκενουμένα, Persians* 549). This separation of bed-partners transforms vows of love into woes of absence.

πολλαὶ δ' ἀπαλαῖς χερσὶ καλύπτρας

κατερεικόμεναι

διαμυδαλέοις δάκρυσι κόλπους

τέγγουσ', ἄλγους μετέχουσαι.

αἱ δ' ἀβρόγοοι Περσίδες ἀνδρῶν

ποθέουσαι ἰδεῖν ἀρτιζυγίαν,

λέκτρων εὐνὰς ἀβροχίτωνας,

χλιδανῆς ἥβης τέρψιν, ἀφεῖσαι,

πενθοῦσι γόοις ἀκορεστοτάτοις.

There are many women, tearing their veils with their soft hands soaking, drenching their breasts with tears, taking their share of pain. The softly wailing women of Persia who long to see their recent bridegrooms, the soft sheets of their nuptial beds, the pleasures of luxuriant youth, abandon themselves to grieving in insatiable laments

(*Persians* 537-45)

We can safely draw the conclusion that the notion of the yoke is a recurring key image in *Persians*, as in the above examples where the image of the yoke carries a strong negative symbolism, which the Athenian audience could easily recognize. Perhaps a more subtle connection between the two yoke images is their feminine essence: the sea acquires a nuance of sexuality both by being subdued during the crossing of the Hellespont and by embracing the drowned soldiers on its seabed.

The only kind of yoke that describes positive feelings in the souls of the women is the yoke of marriage. These tragic figures, the Persian wives, doomed to eternal waiting, feel the emptiness of their life as they slowly sink alone into the sea of despair. Women's tears of 'yearning for husbands' (*πόθῳ φιλάνορι*, *Persians* 135) fill the marriage beds as men's blood fills the sea. Brides alone in their nuptial beds burst into 'insatiable laments' (*γόοις ἀκορεστοτάτοις*, *Persians* 545). The tears that soak their faces evoke the memory of the salty sea; and their beds are left to look like empty boats in the vast sea of their grief.

From one point of view, it is possible to ascertain that this female personification of the powers of nature ends up smashing the marriage yoke and deprives the helpless brides of their husbands. The women of Persia, having accepted the yoke of marriage, must now endure lonely nights in death-ridden beds. A large number of these pined-for Persian men now lie in the seabed. The stories of the women and the sea are ultimately both closely-knit with the raging warriors; the former lamenting for the departed souls, the latter accepting the drowned corpses in an eternal embrace. It can thus be argued that both the sea and the women are, in their own way, depicted as brides of death.[38] Hence, the act of yoking begets a vicious cycle of *hubris* that indicates childbirth and symbolically replaces the erotic union as an element in the creation of children.[39]

The construction of the bridge is made possible by the ability of the human mind to overcome the obstacles posed by nature, abolishing the boundaries between continents, races and cultures to become the cause not of union, but of an ever more intense polarization. The bridge of tied boats is described, thus, as an enabling medium for the King's army to pass over to the opposite neighbours' land. The 'floating bridge bound with flaxen ropes' (*λινοδέσμῳ σχεδίᾳ πορθμὸν ἀμείψας, Persians* 65-7) could be described as a passage of death. Through a 'strong anaphoric repetition'[40] the chorus focuses on ships as the main cause that leads the young Persians to a non-return journey. 'The ships led them away, ships destroyed them, ships destroyed them' (*νᾶες*

[38] On the 'bride of death' theme see Rehm (1994).
[39] This example of *hubris* that suggests childbirth finds its theatrical and literary consummation in Aeschylus' *Oresteia*. Particularly, in *Agamemnon,* through a symbolic birth, the act of *hybris* is inherited from generation to generation. The chorus of elders illustrates this metaphorical reproduction*:* '*φιλεῖ δὲ τίκτειν Ὕβρις/ μὲν παλαιὰ νεά/ζουσαν ἐν κακοῖς βροτῶν/ ὕβριν τότ' ἢ τόθ', ὅτε τὸ κύρ/ιον μόλῃ φάος τόκου/ δαίμονά τε τὰν ἄμαχον ἀπόλεμ/ον, ἀνίερον Θράσος, μελαί/νας μελάθροισιν Ἄτας,/ εἰδομένας τοκεῦσιν*'. (But an old Hubris tends to bring forth in evil men, sooner or later, at the fated hour of birth, a young Hubris and that irresistible, unconquerable, unholy spirit, Recklessness, and for the household black Curses, which resemble their parents). (Aeschylus' *Agamemnon* 763-71). On the idea of the inheritable curse see also Hall (2010, 217).
[40] Hall (1996, 148).

μὲν ἄγαγον, ποποῖ,/ νᾶες δ' ἀπώλεσαν, τοτοῖ,/ νᾶες πανωλέθροισιν ἐμβολαῖς, Persians 560-2). The triple-banked ships become the place of their death (*ἰὴ ἰὴ τρισκάλμοισιν, ἰὴ ἰή, βάρισιν ὀλόμενοι, Persians* 1075-6).

The bridge is a fine example of Aeschylus' ability to evoke mental pictures of dangerous pathways and blooded crossings as carpets of *hubris*. Xerxes crosses the divine stream of the Bosporus, thinking that he could constrain it with fetters like a slave. The crossing of the sacred Hellespont finds its symbolic image in Aeschylus' *Agamemnon* where the king Agamemnon, the conqueror of Troy, becomes the victim of Clytemnestra's persuasion and his own vanity. Agamemnon admits that it is a 'terrible shame for one's foot to mar the resources of the house by wasting wealth and costly woven work.' (*πολλὴ γὰρ αἰδὼς δωματοφθορεῖν ποσὶν/ φθείροντα πλοῦτον ἀργυρωνήτους θ' ὑφάς*, Aeschylus' *Agamemnon* 946-9). But he finally walks upon the sacred and luxurious purple carpet. The sea produces the stain of abundant purple with which vestments and tapestries are dyed. This kind of wealth suggests another way in which humans can intervene in the environment. Through this carpet, the sea symbolically becomes not only part of the setting, but also the passage, which is thus created, leading to death where wealth is of no use. The two kings commit an act of *hubris* as a result of their egotism. Both Xerxes and Agamemnon walking upon the bridge of Hellespont and the 'sea-carpet', respectively, behave such as god-like mortals and this forms an offence to the gods.

Hence, such a power game is a common theme in both *Agamemnon* and *Persians*: the act of male-led hubris upon the divine is initially allowed to prevail over a

woman and nature. Finally, however, the arrogant male is led to his utter destruction.[41] The gates of the palace, where Clytemnestra stands as a guardian, are a boundary between the *cosmos* and *oikos,* akin to how the Hellespont is identified as a border between two different worlds. In Aeschylus' *Agamemnon*, the king's *nostos* is symbolically manifested and temporarily compressed in the brief, but important, 'sea-carpet' passage ritual. In the case of Aeschylus' *Persians*, Xerxes deceives not only nature, but also the workings of time.

By constructing a pathway over the Hellespont, time is compressed, shortening both the duration of the imperialistic expedition to Greece and the lifespan of the Persian army. Time, also, plays a key role as part of Greeks' strategic military plan. Furthermore, time constitutes a decisive factor in the Strymon episode where the extended prostrations of the Persian army delay the crossing of the river and the rays of the rising sun melt the frozen waters.

In Aeschylus' *Persians,* the advent of daylight at Salamis is chosen as the appropriate moment for the Greek attack:

καὶ νὺξ ἐχώρει, κοὐ μάλ' Ἑλλήνων στρατὸς

κρυφαῖον ἔκπλουν οὐδαμῇ καθίστατο

ἐπεί γε μέντοι λευκόπωλος ἡμέρα

πᾶσαν κατέσχε γαῖαν εὐφεγγὴς ἰδεῖν,

πρῶτον μὲν ἠχῇ κέλαδος Ἑλλήνων πάρα

μολπηδὸν ηὐφήμησεν

[41] As Zeitlin (1978, 149-184) argues: 'The prelude of his (Agamemnon) death is his defeat in the verbal exchange between himself and Clytemnestra, a debate which is specifically posed as a power struggle between male and female in which male eventually yields (*Agamemnon*, 940-43)'.

> Night was departing, and the Greek force had not attempted any furtive escape whatever. As soon as the brilliant sight of daybreak and her white horses covered the earth, first a sung cry of good omen rang out loudly from the Greek side
>
> (*Persians* 384-9)

This correlates to the switching between night and day as the Persian army gathers at the banks of the river Strymon.

> *φλέγων γὰρ αὐγαῖς λαμπρὸς ἡλίου κύκλος*
>
> *μέσον πόρον διῆκε, θερμαίνων φλογί*
>
> *πῖπτον δ' ἐπ' ἀλλήλοισιν*
>
> For the bright orb of the sun, blazing with its rays, heated the path with flame and drove through the middle of it.
>
> (*Persians* 503-5)

The day and night contrast is a determining factor in the course of events leading *hubris* into the nets of revenge. The course of events at the right time brings victory to the Hellenes at Salamis and the morning glare of the sun plunges the hunted Persian army into the icy waters of the river Strymon.

Although the tragedy clearly illustrates the polarized dimensions between Greeks and Barbarians[42] based on the 'increasing threat posed to the Greek-speaking

[42] Hall (1989, 11).

world by the immense Persian empire',[43] it is the gulf of Helle, a natural boundary that is used to emphasize the separateness of the world in two physical spaces with different ethnic identities, each denoted by a series of stereotyped features. The hubristic violation of nature evokes the most revengeful punishment for the whole Persian army, but not in the same geographical region where the unjustifiable accident has happened. Once again, time determines the rules of the game. Although Xerxes succeeds in compressing the time of the voyage, bridging the sea's impassable pathway, it is the sea around Salamis where the Persians will drown.

1.4.3 The 'departed' Persians – An invisible chorus in the dark blue waters of Salamis.

A point that features prominently in Aeschylus' *Persians* is the vivid image of the absence of the great Persian army, which is defeated and devastated far away from their homeland. Aeschylus sets his play in Persia, therefore the incidents are narrated as having taken place in a 'faraway' territory, in an offstage world. On stage, there is a static emptiness, a numb atmosphere due to the absence of the entire Persian army and the expectation of news from the departed young soldiers. However, the power of the images conveyed serves to transform to the theatrical stage the crucial episodes of the Persian campaign in which the sea plays a dominant role.

Although Xerxes does appear in the final part of the play (908-1078), the corpses of his erstwhile escort army remain invisible in the depth of the sea around Salamis, or dispersed in the cruel land of Greece. The chorus of the Elders reminisce about the victorious days of the past, when they experienced the supremacy of the

[43] Hall (1989, 57).

Persian empire during their own 'glorious' military campaigns (*πρῶτα μὲν εὐδοκίμους στρατιὰς ἀπεφαινόμεθ'*, *Persians* 858-9); and their unharmed youth when they returned from wars successfully uninjured to their homes (*νόστοι δ' ἐκπολέμων/ ἀπόνους ἀπαθεῖς/ ἀνέρας εὖ πράσσοντας ἄγονοΐκους*, *Persians* 860-2).

They now have to confront both the shame of defeat and the long and painful silence of their dead sons. Throughout the narrations and their recollections, these faraway soldiers and sailors 'surface' and play their own role in the imagination of the audience as an invisible secondary chorus. Transcending space and time, it is of great interest at this point to explore the parallelism and contrast between these two choruses; the living faithful army of the dramatic past as the 'textual' chorus and the dead unburied commanders of the dramatic present as the 'imaginary' chorus of the play.

The chorus of the play is the so-called 'faithful' (*πιστὰ καλεῖται, Persians* 2), the guardians of an empty kingdom, chosen 'by virtue of our seniority' (κατὰ πρεσβείαν, *Persians* 4) to oversee the vast territory of the Persian Empire. Remaining behind, these aged 'friends' (*φίλοι, Persians* 162) of the dead king Darius, are warriors in victories of a glorious past and have perhaps even experienced the battle of Marathon. The chorus waits in fear and anxiety for a sign of the 'departed' (*οἰχομένων, Persians* 1) youthful army. As representatives of the political and social body of the whole empire, these men, said to be thoughtful and good advisors (*συμβούλους καλεῖς, Persians* 175) of the Queen, count the days and 'the time that lengthens' (*τείνοντα χρόνον, Persians* 64); and, like the wives of the Persian soldiers, are scared for an impending devastation of the men of their homeland.

In the *parodos*, the chorus ironically prophesies the future, in these words:

> *δόκιμος δ' οὔτις ὑποστὰς*
> *μεγάλῳ ῥεύματι φωτῶν*
> *ἐχυροῖς ἔρκεσιν εἴργειν*
>
> No one is so renowned for valour that they can withstand such a huge flood of men and ward them off with sturdy defences
>
> (*Persians* 87-89)

But if we liken the bridge of the ships to a kind of fortress, as suggested by the adjective *ὀχυροῖς* (*Persians*, 89), we could justify why the flood of the sea, as a phenomenon of nature, is invincible and able to destroy any kind of obstacle. In the very early part of the tragedy, naval metaphors are used by Aeschylus to introduce the motif of the sea as a dominant dramatic space in *Persians*. The huge flood of men (*Persians* 88), as an invincible sea wave (*Persians* 90), transfers the grandeur and the innumerable multitude of the Persian army before the primitive natural forces.

It is noteworthy to mention, too, that there is a constant emphasis throughout the play on the names of the barbaric commanders. In the *parodos*, the chorus describes the martial superiority of the great and countless army, which selectively acquires a significant identity. The returning messenger expresses the typical Greek ethos of the value of human life by singling out the names of individual Persian commanders, even though 'not a single Greek individual is ever named'.[44] Through the mass of the Persian

[44] Hall (1996, 109).

'flood', man acquires entity. Soldiers are individuals, not numbers. Through their perspective, Aeschylus focuses on their personal lives. Individuals have dreams, families and strength, but the war sends them to a journey without return, deprives them from their fatherland, and the enjoyment of life.

Unlike the elders, whose communal consciousness reveals a united group with common characteristics, the commanders who followed Xerxes to Greece have diverse nationalities, varied skills and even different ways of death. Salamis and Athens are transformed into 'hateful' (*ἔχθος, Persians* 284) and 'abhorrent' (*στυγναί, Persians* 286) regions respectively. Dead soldiers either lie scattered on land, buried by the dust of war, or are washed up on the shores of Salamis like stranded ships.

In *Persians* the sea's contradictory dynamics are connected with the final destination of the sailors. The sea is, at first, harnessed by the ambitious and imperialistic scheme of Xerxes. By the end, however, it becomes the deadly trap where Persians are men not only slaughtered in a sea battle by Greeks, but, as Herodotus later mentions, 'most of the enemy (Persians) being unable to swim were drowned'.[45] Aeschylus, among other effective techniques, uses the antithesis between Europe and Asia, sea and land in order to create in his dramatic world the distinction between Hellenes and Persians respectively. The word *ἔμαθον* (learned, 109), which is used to describe the Persians' naval capability, is an intelligible argument about the crucial difference that explains the Greeks' final victory. The Greeks' proximity to the sea gives them the advantage in naval battles, perhaps not in numerical but in strategic terms, rendering them far more superior in the skilled use of the most effective and

[45] Hall (1994, 54). For Herodotus' account of the battle of Salamis see 8.89.

famous oared warship of the classical period, the trireme, in order to repel the invasion of a threatening hostile force.[46]

Through this dramatic representation of the battle of Salamis, Aeschylus certifies the effectiveness of the sea as a place of no return, a marginal space in the scene of life. A sea full of corpses could be regarded as an unclean, polluted environment, but at the same time it has the ability to purify, 'as a particularly powerful cleansing agent.'[47] The universality of the sea gives to the exposed bodies a place of peace away from home in a place that is a no man's land. The missing bodies swaying on the bed of the sea are seen to maintain a perpetual mobility that differs from the stillness within a tomb. The currents of the sea function as a passage continuously shifting between light and darkness, life and death. The lifeless bodies become part of the food chain and, hence, part of a cosmic whole. The 'departed' men crossing the boundaries of life are exposed to an endless journey, and the sea, like an amniotic sac, provides them with a constant, protected, and symbolic milieu of rebirth. Silent and invisible wandering souls return as haunted images, in search of the life that war stopped so violently. The Elders reflect the young Persians' future lives, which they will not enjoy, and the expectation and the sadness of their absence.

The haunted silent and invisible chorus is a dominant image, which connects the desolation of Asia with the 'sea hidden by the wreckage and corpses strewn upon it'.[48] The presence of the absence constitutes the power of the picture far more than any other representation. Men in the dark blue waters are caught in the net of deceit, locked and

[46] Morrison-Coates-Rankov (2000, 1). See also Morrison & Williams (1968, 1-2).
[47] Lindenlauf (2004, 424).
[48] Anderson (1972, 172).

trapped with no hope of survival. The soil of the sea-washed island, 'holds the remains of the Persians' (*ἔχει τὰ Περσᾶν, Persians* 596).

These soldiers become the unseen (the etymology of the word Hades/ *ἀ-ἰδεῖν* means an inability to see) and the 'defenseless creatures of nature'.[49] The impetuous waves of the sea depict the power of Persian imperialism to expand its dominance but end up as a deep sea of misfortune. The corpses remain abandoned in a hostile territory and the chorus provides threnodic odes to honor the irretrievable 'flower of the Persians who has fallen and gone' (*τὸ Περσῶν δ' ἄνθος οἴχεται πεσόν, Persians* 252). The remaining army still alive, fly in disorder and follow the hard route from Athens to Persia. The land of Greece has proved inhospitable, making the defeated soldiers unable to endure harsh physical conditions. Although Persians prostrate themselves before Earth and Sky, the waters of Strymon become another aqueous passage of destruction and death.

1.4.4 Strymon – The icy bridge of revenge

The Messenger's speech addresses Salamis as the 'most hateful name to hear' (*ὦ πλεῖστον ἔχθος ὄνομα Σαλαμῖνος κλύειν*, *Persians* 284-5); he clearly focuses on this island and the sea that surrounds it as spaces of disaster filled by the Persians who perished by a miserable fate. It is no doubt that the destruction of the Persian navy is a result of the Greeks' cunning intelligence, their mutual cooperation, and the principle of discipline as central strategy of their naval tactics. However, it can be argued that the bridging of Hellespont, and its theological effects as an act of offence against Poseidon (*Persians*, 745-50), adumbrates, among other significant factors, the Persian defeat.

[49] Taplin (1977, 125).

Nature's definitive revenge not only lurks behind the prevalent role of the sea at the battle of Salamis, but also occurs during the long return journey of the remaining Persian army crossing the hostile Greek mainland. The proud Persian bridging of the Hellespont, with which the invasion commences, is thus overturned in the end as the army's disorderly flight is violently halted by the divine powers of nature.

The inability of an army to endure difficult survival conditions in a hostile land, vividly expressed through Aeschylus' poetic imagination, is an excellent example of a 'dramatically effective illustration'.[50] As Horsfall clearly states, referring to the Strymon; 'the river-crossing is an appropriate form of punishment for the crossing of the Straits'.[51] It is noteworthy to explore the way in which a personified river-god is transformed into a vengeful force and at the same time, through mirror imagery, how the fall of the Persians drowning in the waters reflects both the fall of Helle and the symbolic moral fall of king Xerxes' bridging of the Hellespont.

The inglorious flight of the destroyed army occupies a privileged position in Aeschylus' *Persians*. The surviving soldiers who have withstood a 'harrowing march'[52] from Greece to Thrace must bear the last act of their 'tragedy'. The Strymon incident serves a particular function in relation to the plot's progression. I believe it is possible to carry Horsfall's conclusion a step further. Aeschylus interjects this episode, as a strong mirror image in order to signify the fate awaiting those who cross nature's fundamental boundaries. In the Persians' return journey, the sacred river Strymon, with its mythopoetic imaginative presence, becomes the site of the final revenge for Xerxes' atrocities against the sea through its gradual transformation from an icy passage to a watery death space formulating nature's divine trap.

[50] Broadhead (1960, xxxii).
[51] Horsfall (1974, 505).
[52] Rosenbloom (2006, 13).

The drowning of men in the cold waters of a divine river illustrates effectively nature's merciless treatment of those who offend it. The inability of the defeated army to swim, in conjunction with their incompetence to handle the variability of weather conditions and physical hardship, led to a dead end without any hope of survival. The imagery of hopeless, panic-stricken soldiers desperately gasping for breath probably brought to the audience's mind the inadequacy of the Persian navy's maneuvering in the narrow straits of Salamis and its final crushing and destruction in the sea-shores.

The sun reveals itself as a divine ally for Greeks. Both in Salamis and at the Strymon the rising sun is the harbinger of a terrible fate. The Persians, already suffering from fatigue, meet their doom in the trap, which is revealed by the sun's first rays. At Salamis, the Persians, while preparing meticulously for battle, ceaselessly patrolled the straits during the night, causing them to become exhausted by daybreak:

> *τάξαι νεῶν στῖφος μὲν ἐν στοίχοις τρισὶν*
>
> *ἔκπλους φυλάσσειν καὶ πόρους ἁλιρρόθους,*
>
> *ἄλλας δὲ κύκλῳ νῆσον Αἴαντος πέριξ*
>
> they were to arrange the column of ships in three rows to guard the passageways leading out to the sounding sea, and other ships were to surround and encircle Ajax's island.
>
> (*Persians* 366-8)

Similarly, at the banks of the Strymon, the ragged army prepares to cross the frozen river, this time by spending the entire night 'prostrating themselves before earth and sky' (*γαῖαν οὐρανόν τε προσκυνῶν, Persians* 498-9). In both circumstances, 'the bright orb of the sun' (*φλέγων γὰρ αὐγαῖς λαμπρὸς ἡλίου κύκλος*, *Persians* 505) leads the men

to an everlasting nocturnal journey with no return. As Horsfall mentions, 'the Strymon catastrophe is assigned a place alongside Salamis in the scheme of divine repayment for Xerxes' presumptuous subjection of the Hellespont.'[53] The philosophical *topos* of *πάθει-μάθος* (learning from adversity) in Aeschylus' dramaturgy and tragedy as a whole, binds mortals to obey willingly or unwillingly a preconceived destiny.[54] The retribution of punishment for an act of *hubris* through divine intervention precedes man's repentance.

The once mighty and 'gold bedecked army' (*Persians* 11) ends up experiencing poverty and harsh physical conditions. Man realizes his powerlessness and desperately seeks comfort. He addresses his prayers to the Earth and Sky. I suggest, here, that it is of extreme significance that no mention of the sea, or any other personified water divinity is made. This is perhaps another important expression of the Greeks' belief for the Persians' unfamiliarity with the sea. Their invocations to the gods were not heard. The gods' silence suggests their imminent fate. This usual barbaric motif of prostration before both gods and equal to gods (*ἰσόθεος*) humans, as an act of obedience and humiliation creates an atmosphere of static despair. Like caged animals, the once ambitious and powerful Persian army becomes a group of wandering people struggling for their salvation and praying for their return, trapped in a hostile land.

One could argue that the last emotion that these barbaric weakened soldiers feel is desire for *nostos*. As they drown in the waters of the 'pure Strymon' (*ἁγνοῦ Στρυμόνος, Persians* 497) their death in a sacred river can be seen as a process of cleansing, illustrating effectively the power of divine providence over Man's arrogance and futility.

[53] Horsfall (1974, 505).
[54] The term derives from Aeschylus' *Agamemnon*.

The non-crossing of the river Strymon illustrates a continuous and endless act of an unsuccessful return of the Persian army. Although Aeschylus mentions an extended catalogue of places where difficult conditions and losses occurred to the infantry after the defeat at Salamis, sea images continue to play a significant role as a dramatic effect of Aeschylus' poetic evocation of the Persians' invasion of Greece and the enormous defeat during their disorderly flight.

1.4.5 The sea-metaphors in Aeschylus' *Persians*.

The Greeks' familiarity with the sea, as illustrated in ancient Greek tragedy, is one of the most characteristic motifs. The contradictory features of the sea equip the authors with a valuable dramatic image, which is able to evoke in the spectators, through its multiple transformations, feelings of awe, fear, and admiration. The use of extended naval metaphors and vocabulary plays a significant role in the plot's development.[55] In *Persians*, water is an element with multiple functions and divine power. The vast imagery of the sea, the continuous flow of the rivers and the unending motion of the waves create a poetic pattern bridging Aeschylus' descriptions with the audience's active imagination. Ironic reversals in the play concerning the aquatic element reveal the unpredictable behavior of nature and its dynamic power. The 'unmanned' land identifies the effeminisation of Persia,[56] with a shocked queen staying 'silent in misery' (*σιγῶ πάλαι δύστηνος ἐκπεπληγμένη*, *Persians* 290) and Persian women lamenting in tears.

[55] On how metaphor works in tragedy see Padel (1992).
[56] Hall (1996).

The frequent references concerning the recurring imagery of the sea in Aeschylus' *Persians* introduces an imaginative journey where the sea, despite its absence from the theatrical setting, has a prominent role in the visible sphere of the theatre. By focusing on the power of the dramatic narration to make the offstage events vivid in the audience's imagination, it is of great concern to explore the function of this watery vast territory in a defined scenic locus.

In one of the most epic depictions in the play, Aeschylus exhibits the Persians' invasion in Greece as a dynamic wave of which no one can resist its impetuosity. The invincible sea wave (*Persians* 90) emphasizes the superiority and the immeasurable momentum of Xerxes' fleet and cavalry. The white waves crashing on the shore and the rocks of Salamis draw a direct parallel with the defeated Persians scattered dead in the sea. The north wind 'whitens' the vast surface (*Persians* 110) that looks like a 'godlike flock' (*ποιμανόριον θεῖον, Persians* 74) led by a shepherd without prudence. The connection between invincible waves and the flood of men (*ἄμαχον κῦμα θαλάσσας*, *Persians* 88) presage the later 'wave of disasters' (*κλύδων κακῶν*, *Persians* 599). The multiple references of the sea in the tragedy display its 'dangerous and savage nature',[57] as the cumulative poetic pattern reaches its climax with the phrase: 'ships are ships no more, ships no more' (*νᾶες ἄναες ἄναες, Persians* 680).

At Salamis, under the white colour of the waves it is not the dark-blue of the sea that is revealed but the red colour of blood. The flood of the surfaced corpses makes the sea disappear and reduces 'the once glorious and triumphant Persia in depths of misery'.[58] I believe that the sea-passage from East to West offers multiple symbolisms. The boat pathway of the Hellespont becomes a bloody carpet of ships and soldiers

[57] Lindenlauf (2004, 418).
[58] Broadhead (1960, xxiii).

around Salamis. The Persians' surfaced bodies transform the sea into land, but in a different way. With their colorful robes around them they look like islands and the sun shining on their armor recalls the luxury of the once gold-bedecked army. These representatives of 'the flower of manhood' (*Περσῶν δ' ἄνθος, Persians* 59) wilt in the vast watery grove (*πόντιον ἄλσος, Persians* 111) with no possibility of flourishing in their birth land.

Among other metaphors in the play we could detect some analogies between humans and animals, reflecting the vast barbaric expedition. 'Animals become symbolic of moral and physical qualities',[59] giving some characteristics such as the size or the ethical identity of the Persian army. 'A swarm of bees' (*σμῆνος ὣς ἐκλέλοιπεν μελισσᾶν*, *Persians* 129) provides the image of an innumerous flying army. 'Fishes' trapped in the nets of fishermen (*θύννους ἤ τιν' ἰχθύων βόλον, Persians* 424) and later humans 'mangled by the silent children of the undefiled sea' (*Persians* 578) suggest the hunting game between the might of Persia and the power of nature. Furthermore the 'Dark-eyed and sail-winged ships' (*αἱ δ' ὀμόπτεροι κυανώπιδες, Persians* 559) become the *daimones* of the sea, which destroy and lead the Persians to their last destination in the realm of Hades.

Nature becomes a tough judge for those who claim that they learned (*ἔμαθον, Persians* 106) the secrets of the sea. Hence, Aeschylus perhaps wants to show that, as a sacred place, the immaculate and pure sea should preserve its divine and unexplored quality. This is why Xerxes, bridging the gulf of Helle, appears at the end defeated and humiliated. Among other contradictory dynamics ascribed to the sea, the recognition of its presence in ancient tragedy as an ambiguous, marginal and unpredictable space justifies not only feelings of awe and fear, but also the challenge of its conquest.

[59] Stanford (1942, 89).

The personification of the sea as a woman who feels and suffers under subjection is emphasized by the recurrent imagery of the yoke as a symbol of subordination and also suggests the stout resistance of the Greek army to the imperialistic ambitions of the barbarians. The yoke in *Persians*, as we have already mentioned in a previous part of this chapter, is used as a violent pattern of union: consider the yoke of woman's slavery in the Queen's dream, the yoke over the sea, and the marriage yoke. The bond, whether imposed against their will or accepted, is broken. The image of the yoke depicts not only the *hubris* of imperialism but also suggests the symbolic image of a deadly trap that pulls down the blossoms of Persia onto the seabed of Salamis, in the upcoming naval battle. The sea is 'no man's slave'.[60] It only belongs to the free spirits and divine creatures who refuse to capitulate to the rules of submission.

Aeschylus uses the imaginative world of his poetry to compose a landscape, which transcends the architectural limits of the ancient Greek theatre in order to challenge the imagination and to stimulate the audience's memory. Seen in its contemporary historical content, the *Persians* furthermore serve as an ingenious warning bell to the emerging imperialistic ambitions of Athens among its allies and enemies. By constructing a grid of metaphors, similes and connotations, concerning the seascape as a prominent image with many significant sociopolitical, ideological and aesthetical interpretations, Aeschylus transforms the report of the Greek victory at Salamis into the account of the impact of defeat in a distanced barbaric realm. The privileged imagery of the sea is a determining factor, which illustrates Greek preeminence, but, simultaneously, it could be transformed into an ambiguous environment, which evokes unpredictable catastrophes. In the land of Persia, the king

[60] Rosenbloom (2006, 44).

Darius, through a metaphysical appearance into the visible theatrical stage, reveals, particularly, the theological aspects that lead the Persian army to destruction.

1.4.6 The Necromancy of the king Darius and the symbolic *anaklisis* of the 'departed' souls from the depth of Hades.

Aeschylus' dramaturgic choice to bring the dead king Darius back from the underworld is signaled through a ritual invocation by the chorus. The once mighty Darius appears as a ghost (*εἴδωλον*) and his words, demonstrating prudence and wisdom, constitute a meditation on the futility of existence. The power and the luxury of his barbaric identity cannot redeem immortality. Through the insistent appeals of his faithful elders, his mortal body gains a few precious moments of life, a brief interval in the eternal quagmire of death.

Although the elders of the chorus address their invocations to the dead king Darius, naming him as equal to god and demon (*ἰσόθεος, Persians* 856 and *ἰσοδαίμων, Persians* 634), the function of the prayers to the 'pure gods of the underworld' (*χθόνιοι δαίμονες ἁγνοί*, *Persians* 628) could be connected, through a somewhat arbitrary correlation which transcends the metaphysical *cosmos*, with all named references to the Persian leaders lost both at land and sea. In the morbid atmosphere that surrounds the land of Persia, which is symbolically focused scenically at the tomb of the revered king Darius, we could suggest that his epiphany reflects the emergence of the invisible lost souls of the 'departed' young soldiers and sailors from the abyss of the sea and Hades. It is as if the sea is swelling up and spilling them out of that tomb.

Darius' words identify and specify the causes of *hubris*. The alteration (*μετερρύθμιζε, Persians* 747) of nature was achieved by his son, who is proved to be

'uncomprehending in his youthful audacity' (*παῖς δ' ἐμὸς τάδ' οὐ κατειδὼς ἤνυσεν νέῳ θράσει, Persians* 744). The numerous misfortunes are metaphorically conceptualized as a 'fountain spring of misery' (*κακῶν πηγὴ, Persians 745*). The image of waters springing from the depth of the Earth not only is a recurrent motif which expresses the invaluable natural resources, such as the mines at Laureion, but also an appropriate indirect reference to the sea which is macabrely converted into a space of death.

The king, whose historical equivalent committed many similar arrogant acts that he attributes to his son, especially the bridging of the Thracian Bosporus as part of his unsuccessful Scythian expedition, is portrayed in the *Persians* as a much more prudent predecessor.[61] Darius' dramatic persona appears both as a wise ancestor recounting the events that occurred during his lifetime and as a prophet foretelling the future. His presence introduces a metaphysical dimension that intersects the dramatic time. It is noteworthy to mention that in *Persians*, one of the first literary works of humanity, Aeschylus displays considerable theatrical license by introducing a ghost as a key character of the play. This is the ghost of a barbarian king; a ghost who reflects the different world from the one that he bequeathed to his son Xerxes. Darius is ignorant of past events. He asks about the 'new and onerous evil' that 'crushing the Persians' (*τίἐστι Πέρσαις νεοχμὸν ἐμβριθὲς κακόν, Persians* 693) and yet prophesies the future stating that 'even the forces now in Greek territory will fail to return home safely' (*ἀλλ' οὐδ' ὁ μείνας νῦν ἐν Ἑλλάδος τόποις/ στρατὸς κυρήσει νοστίμου σωτηρίας*, *Persians* 796-7).

The immediate dramatic past falls into the scenic present through the chorus' knowledge of their contemporary events, the queens' dream and the messenger's

[61] Herodotus 4.87-89.

enlightening speech. The conception of inserting the character of Darius' ghost into the play is employed by Aeschylus in order to bring the realm of the future into the scenic present achieving his dramatic and poetic purpose.

The events 'on the Earth of Plataia, where the bloody sacrificial slaughter caused by Doric spears' (*πέλανος αἱματοσφαγὴς πρὸς γῇ Πλαταιῶν Δωρίδος λόγχης ὕπο*, *Persians* 816-7), having taken place less than a decade before, were common knowledge to both Aeschylus and his audience in 472 BC. The audience's common recent history is therefore reiterated as the dramatic future of the play. Nevertheless, the focus on Salamis is continuously underlined in order to elevate the naval achievements. The use of the word *πέλανος* may refer to a liquid substance, but it may be connected, in the audience's imagination, with the word *πέλαγος* (sea) where the slaughter of Salamis has taken place.

Searching for the causes of the Persian defeat, Darius encapsulates the entire essence of the tragic nature of man in the phrase:

ἀλλ' ὅταν σπεύδῃ τις αὐτός, χὠ θεὸς συνάπτεται

when someone is himself hasty, god lends assistance, too

(*Persians* 742)

The dead king considers the bonds of the sacred Hellespont as an act of insult to all the gods and more specifically to a god who is named for the first time in the play:

θνητὸς ὢν θεῶν τε πάντων ᾤετ', οὐκ εὐβουλίᾳ,

καὶ Ποσειδῶνος κρατήσειν.

Although only a mortal, he foolishly thought that he could overcome all the gods, including Poseidon.

(*Persians* 749-750)

Poseidon personifies the fury of the powerful and vengeful sea. Darius believes that Xerxes commits this ecological crime on account of some disease affecting his mind (*νόσος φρενῶν, Persians* 750). The strait, which is created with wisdom by nature, is transformed (*μετερρύθμιζε, Persians* 747), by the young King, into an isthmus; a 'land' passage for his great army. However, the rules of nature persevere and humans, blinded by their arrogance and the passion of excessive ambition, are foolish enough to forget them. Either nature itself or the gods will always remind them of their limitations:

Ζεύς τοικολαστὴς τῶν ὑπερκόμπων ἄγαν

φρονημάτων ἔπεστιν, εὔθυνος βαρύς.

πρὸς ταῦτ' ἐκεῖνον, σωφρονεῖν κεχρημένον,

πινύσκετ' εὐλόγοισι νουθετήμασιν,

λῆξαι θεοβλαβοῦνθ' ὑπερκόμπῳ θράσει.

For Zeus stands over and chastises arrogant minds, and he is a stern ancestor. So in the light of this, use sensible words of warning to

admonish Xerxes to behave temperately and stop offending the gods with his boasts and excessive confidence

(*Persians* 827-31)

In praising Poseidon's strength Aeschylus connects invincible nature and the decisive presence of the sea with the life and fate of the people who are linked with this aquatic realm. Poseidon as a divine ally of the Greeks enhances the polar motif sea-land. Using this separation model, Aeschylus' prevalent intention is to highlight the difference between Greeks and barbarians in his theatrical world beyond any historical accuracy or numerical superiority. His political propaganda, whether intentional or unintentional, successfully connects the Hellenes with supremacy over the sea, while, at the same time, raising obvious concerns about the possessions and colonies, which the Athenian city-state has or seeks to bring under its hegemony. Although Aeschylus elects to make a very brief mention of Poseidon (*Persians* 750), he imports yet another notion of divine retribution into the play. The wrath of the supreme sea god, who is from one point of view alluded to in all naval imageries in the play, may be interpreted as acquiring almost equal significance to Zeus' 'chastising of arrogant minds' (*Persians* 827).

Ships are no ships (*Persians* 680) and bodies are no longer bodies. The verbal dynamic of the words of the play could have multiple connotations in the audience's vivid imagination and their level of poetic perception. The last words of the chorus, spoken just before the appearance of Darius' ghost, offer a wealth of possible para-etymological comparisons. The aural connection of the word *ἄναες* (no ships) with the sound of the verb *ἀν-αείρω, ἀνά-αείρω* which means 'heave over the land', 'up heave' may have been a simple and obvious one to the ears of the contemporary spectator;

perhaps a more obscure connotation would have been made with the verb *ἀνα-ζάω* which means 'come back to life'. These last words of the second *stasimon* summon Darius' appearance (*ὄψις*). Scholars have offered a variety of contradictory interpretations, concerning the precise scenic location of Darius' 'vertical' entry from the depth of Earth.[62] The epiphany of Darius and the memory of the victims of war that this evokes, proves even temporarily the power of life over death: not as a hope for a life after death, but as an awareness of the preciousness of human life.

The repeated recitation of the Persian generals 'haunts' the whole play as a form of Necromancy for the unburied bodies in a distanced and hostile territory. The metaphorical aspects of this metaphysical dimension are, from one point of view, brought to completion at the end of the play. Here, at the final *pompe* of the defeated Xerxes towards the palace, the distressed figures of the elder chorus acquire the identity of the Immortals, the invincible guard of the King. Thus, it can be postulated that, in the ancient orchestra a connection is made, both temporal and spatial: temporally, the elders become the reverse mirror image of the absent young troops, indicating by their presence the connection between past and present, and perhaps even fostering possible images of the dead soldiers' lost future.

Xerxes leaving his army behind and razed, commands the remaining aged Persians to groan for his sake, rowing with their arms like oars (*ἔρεσσ' ἔρεσσε καὶ στέναζ' ἐμὴν χάριν*, *Persians* 1046). His empty quiver implies another symbolic image of overwhelming loss, perhaps reminding the Athenians of their own eleventh bier for the abandoned corpses in hostile territories.[63] Furthermore, a spatial connection is achieved between the dramatic and the scenic locum: Xerxes' lament for his 'divine

[62] For the representation of the 'above' in *Persians,* see Taplin (1977, 114-119).
[63] Thucydides (2.34.1-3) gives a description of the public funerals that Athenians provided for those who had fallen during the war. Among these is carried one empty bier decked for the missing corpses, that is, for those whose bodies could not be retrieved.

folk' (*ποιμανόριον θεῖον, Persians* 74) is in effect a funeral oration and combines with the funerary procession to compose the image of a reverse 'departure' ceremony. It is thence possible to characterize this final funeral march as the metaphorical homecoming of the departed spirits of soldiers and sailors from the depth of Hades. This serves as a sharp contrast to the glorious farewell of the immediate past ceremony. Thus, the imaginary corpses of Persia's flower return to the land that nourished them and find their final resting place at the tomb of the great king Darius.

In such a manner, the sea, which is so prominent in imagery, metaphor and even implied in the scenography of the necromancy scene, takes huge sociopolitical and even metaphysical dimensions in explaining the relationship between Athenians/Greeks and barbarians and justifying the outcome of war in terms of theology and theodicy.

Chapter 2

The Seashore as a liminal space in Euripides' *Hecuba* and *Trojan Women*

2. Introduction

Space is one of the most important components of dramatic illusion in ancient Greek tragedy. Its visible power during the performance, and its invisible dynamics, shape the dramatic universe of the play and create a topographic landscape of codes with multiple semiotics and symbolisms. The 'space of plays'[64] is an important field of analysis evoking challenging and, in many cases, contradictory discourses. In *Hecuba* and the *Trojan Women* the dramatic setting oscillates between two particular spaces: the devastated Troy, and the sea as the setting for the imminent departure of the Greek army and Trojan captive women for Greece.

Most seminal studies concerning space in *Hecuba* and *Trojan Women*, have only focused on two aspects of the function of the sea: as a passage to exile for the Trojan captive women and as a passage to return home for the Greek army.[65] Particularly, in *Trojan Women*, scholars point out the role of the sea as the background for the Greeks' destruction, which is desired and also is prefigured by Poseidon and Athena in the prologue. Although in these two tragedies the seashore plays a significant role as a borderline and crossing place, little attention has been paid to this imaginary locality as a prominent off-stage setting.

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[64] On the role of space in ancient Greek tragedy see Rush Rehm (2002) *The Play of Space*, which gives significant interpretations and an open field of discussion concerning the spatial dynamics of tragedy. About the performance of Greek tragedy in the classical Athenian theatre see David Wiles' (1997) seminal work *Tragedy in Athens - Performance space and theatrical meaning.* For stage management and direction see the study of Oliver Taplin (2003) *Greek tragedy in action.*

[65] Collard (1991), Gregory (1997 and 1999), Harrison (2008), Hourmouziades (1965), Lee (1976), Mossman (1995), O' Neill (1941), Rehm (2002), Segal (1990), Zeitlin (1991).

This chapter aims to investigate the seashore as a unique milieu, which provides a liminal territory in the narrative. The seashore could be identified as a neutral space in which the two opposing parties, the Greek army and the Trojan women, struggle for their own rights. This territory, that will be unoccupied and uninhabitable after the end of the plays, is identified temporarily as a border between homeland and a foreign land, past and future, freedom and exile. The structure of this chapter is composed of five different themes regarding the seashore as a departure point to exile and the image of the sea as a centripetal force in Euripides' *Hecuba* and *Trojan Women* in particular.

Firstly we shall examine the metaphysical dimension of the prologue speeches in the two tragedies. That is, the way in which the divine figure of Poseidon in *Trojan Women* and the dead body of Polydorus in *Hecuba* determine the framework and the development of the plot in direct relation to space. The second section of this analysis presents the seashore as a boundary between the sea and land and the contradictory features that this place connotes as a prominent landscape within the narratives. Section 2.3 examines how the Trojan captive women's emotions of loss and despair create, through their songs, imagery of a distant world, and how their journey on the sea may be seen as a symbolic rite of passage. The fourth section discusses the nautical imagery in *Hecuba* and *Trojan Women* and specifically the references to the Greek ships as a leitmotif throughout the plays; while the last section of this chapter focuses on Hecuba's death and her watery grave at Cynossema as a warning landmark for sailors.

2.1 The metaphysical dimension of the Prologue in *Hecuba* and *Trojan Women*

A number of scholars turn their attention to the function of the prologue in Euripides' dramaturgy in an attempt to investigate the multiplicity of its effects upon the narrative.[66] Focusing particularly on the divine characters that often deliver the opening lines,[67] they place an emphasis on the cosmic and metaphysical dynamic presence that in many tragedies determines the evolution of the plot, either through the supernatural figure's prophecies, or by gods' ambivalent desire to prove their dominance over mortals.

Euripides *Hecuba* and *Trojan Women* dramatize the aftermath of the Trojan War and the journey of the Greek army and female population of Troy from Troy to Greece. The setting of the two tragedies is geographically different, yet both present images of desolation, remoteness, and cruelty. Both the Thracian Chersonese and the territory near the shores of Troy may be characterised as 'haunted' spaces inhabited by ghosts, gods and, particularly, by threshold-mortals hovering between life and death, past and future, peace and torment.[68]

Although scholarly studies have shown the dramatic importance of the entrance of the spectre of Polydorus and the divine arrival of Poseidon in the prologue of *Hecuba* and *Trojan Women* respectively, less critical attention has been devoted to a possible connection between these two metaphysical figures, their common place of departure before their entrance on stage and their prophetic abilities.

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[66] For specific aspects of the prologue in Euripides see Erbse (1984), Hamilton (1978), Fontenrose (1967), O' Neill (1941).

[67] In surviving plays of Euripides, the opening lines delivered by a divine character in *Alcestis*, *Bacchae*, *Hippolytus*, *Trojan Women* and *Ion*. In *Hecuba* the spectre of Polydorus delivers the prologue but, as Halleran (1984, 8) argues, 'it functions in the same way as the others'.

[68] Zeitlin (1991, 53) describes the stage setting in Euripides' *Hecuba* as a place 'haunted by ghosts'. As Croally (1994, 176) comments, the Thracian Chersonese is 'a border zone which lacks any signs of civilization'.

Taking into account previous interpretations of the prologue's role in these two tragedies, this section aims to investigate and to extend the relationship between the vulnerable Polydorus and the powerful Poseidon. More specifically, we will examine the traits the characters share, their spatial appearance, and how the role of the sea, in relation to their presence on stage, plays a significant role as a background in these two tragedies.

2.1.1 The sea as a place of departure

In the prologue of *Trojan Women*, Poseidon appears from the 'salty depths of the Aegean' (*Ἥκω λιπὼν Αἰγαιον ἁλμυρὸν βάθος/ πόντου Ποσειδῶν*, *Trojan Women* 1-2) to bid fare well to his beloved city (*ἀλλ', ὦ ποτ' εὐτυχοῦσα, χαῖρέ μοι, πόλις/ ξεστόν τε πύργωμ', Trojan Women 45-6*). The image of the sea is reflected through the poetic synecdoche of the salty waters of the Aegean, where the Nereids' dance is performed (*Νηρήδων χοροὶ κάλλιστον ἴχνος ἐξελίσσουσιν ποδός*, *Trojan Women* 2-3).[69] This vision illustrates a mythic world of perpetual motion.[70]

The dark depths of the ocean, and the way in which the prologue of Trojan Women progresses with the entrance of the goddess Athena, create a sea-centred-scenery of imminent disaster. Athena's sudden decision to destroy the Greeks for their impiety, after their departure from Troy, demonstrates that suffering is all mortals' destiny. This produces the dramatic irony which underlies the whole narrative, since the whole construction of the play's dramaturgy requires the audience's knowledge of a

[69] Nereids are the daughters of the sea god Nereus and, as Larson (2001,7) mentions, are 'the marine counterpart of the nymphs who live in springs and woods…they love to dance and often have laisons with mortals'. O'Neill (1941, 296) indicates that the function of the word *χοροί* pre-contrast the wretchedness of captive women and their imminent song of fear and misery.

[70] Goff (2009, 41) identifies that this corrugated movement is connected with Athena's shifting allegiances between Greeks and Trojans.

future unknown to most of those on stage. This is emphasized by the fact that the Greeks' desired departure brings them closer to disaster. The former divine ally of the Greeks, who grants them aid in the war with her decisive intervention and assistance, aims at acquiring and, finally, attains a pact with the god of the sea, Poseidon. This divine alliance will cause a terrible homecoming to afflict the Achaeans, (*στρατῷ δ' Ἀχαιῶν νόστον ἐμβαλεῖν πικρόν*, *Trojan Women* 66) transforming their homeward journey into a disaster (*δύσνοστον αὐτοῖς νόστον, Trojan Women* 75).

The impressive visual effect of the presence of the two gods in *Trojan Women*,[71] is equally achieved in *Hecuba* by the entrance of Polydorus's spectre.[72] The word *ἥκω* which means 'I have come' (*Hecuba* l, *Trojan Women* l) in Greek tragedy often announces the arrival of a divine figure. More specifically, though, in the case of *Hecuba*, we witness the appearance of a supernatural, figure, rather than the divine.[73]

The prologue of Polydorus entails all the characteristics of such an uncanny, supernatural presence. On the threshold between a mortal body and an eternal soul, Polydorus is in a state of transition. The youngest son of King Priam, sent away by his father to the house of his friend Polymestor in the Thracian peninsula in order to be protected after Ilium's fall, is lethally betrayed by his host. His body, 'unwept and unburied' (*ἄκλαυτος ἄταφος*, *Hecuba* 30),[74] is now 'carried to and fro, in the constant ebb and flow of the waves' (*ἄλλοτ' ἐν πόντου σάλῳ,/ πολλοῖς διαύλοις κυμάτων*

[71] Buxton (1994) refers to the Parthenon west pediment on which Athene and Poseidon appear at the centre of compositions struggling for the right to be protector of Athens. The work on the pediments lasted from 438 to 432 BC.
[72] Vernant (1991, 167-8) analyses Plato's definition of spectre (*eidolon*) as a 'second like object'. He observes that the archaic *eidolon* is the inclusion of a 'being elsewhere' in the midst of a 'being here' and takes three forms: a dream image (*onar*), an apparition sent by a god (*phasma*), and a phantom of a deceased (*psyche*).
[73] Collard (1991, 130) points out the use of the word *ἥκω* apart from Euripides' *Hecuba* and *Trojan Women,* in *Bachae* (Dionysus), *Andromache* (Thetis, although she does not speak the prologue of the play) and in fragment 523 of *Polyxena* (Achilles' Ghost). Also Lee (1976, 66), states the regular use of the word by supernatural visitors, citing Thetis in Euripides' *Andromache* (1232).
[74] As Burnett (1998, 158) observes, the phrase *ἄκλαυτος ἄταφος* is borrowed from Elpenor (Homer's *Odyssey* 11.54, cf72).

φορούμενος, Hecuba 28-29). This image evokes the dead corpses of the 'flower of Argives' in the Aegean sea in *Agamemnon* (*ἀνθοῦν πέλαγος Αἰγαῖον νεκροῖς, Agamemnon* 659) and the once mighty Persian army slaughtered and drowned in the waters of Salamis. (*θάλασσα δ' οὐκέτ' ἦν ἰδεῖν,/ ναυαγίων πλήθουσα καὶ φόνου βροτῶν*, *Persians* 419-20). The powerful imagery of the body as floating on the surface of the sea, is reminiscent of the sailing of the ships.

Therefore, the sea acquires the function of a temporary locus of death; a space that hosts the dead body of an innocent young man, brutally murdered by the man responsible for his protection. 'The gates of darkness' (*σκότου πύλας, Hecuba* 1) are the point of departure for a wandering ghost, which arrives in the visible theatrical space to narrate what preceded, and so with his prophetic ability outlines the evolution of the plot.

In both tragedies the sea both participates in, and becomes the vehicle for the unfolding revenge.[75] Its surface reveals in the daylight the dark motives and causes of forcible acts. The bipolarity that characterizes one of the basic conceptual axes of ancient Greek tragedy, the contrast between light and darkness, is then paralleled by the antithesis between life and death.[76] The light of the sun is 'equivalent itself to life'[77] and, hence, the image of the shade, either beneath the earth or in the darkness of the ocean, could be regarded as equivalent to death.

[75] On revenge see Burnett (1998), Kerrigan (1996), Seaford (1994).
[76] Hall (2010, 2).
[77] Barlow (2008, ix).

2.1.2 The semiotics of the dead body

ἴστω δ' Ἀΐδας ὁ μελαγχαί-

τας θεὸς ὅς τ' ἐπὶ κώπᾳ

πηδαλίῳ τε γέρων

νεκροπομπὸς ἵζει

πολὺ δὴ πολὺ δὴ γυναῖκ' ἀρίσταν

λίμναν Ἀχεροντίαν πορεύ-

σας ἐλάτᾳ δικώπῳ

Let Hades, black-haired god, and the old man who sits

at oar and tiller, ferryman of souls, be sure that it is by far

the best of women that he has ferried in his skiff across

the lake of Acheron.

(Euripides, *Alcestis*, 438-444)

The semiotics of the dead body in Greek tragedy are often connected with the image of sailing, rivers, marshes and the sea. The watery off-stage environment in tragic theatre was used to illustrate the passage between life and death. In Euripides's *Alcestis* (438-444), for instance, the image of death is depicted as an old man in a boat crossing the Acheron.

In *Trojan Women*, Poseidon states that the ships of the Greeks carry 'the massy gold and Trojan spoils' (*πολὺς δὲ χρυσὸς Φρύγιά τε σκυλεύματα*, *Trojan Women* 19). If we connect this information with Polydorus's speech, in which he announces that gold is the reason for his violent murder (*κτείνει με χρυσοῦ τὸν ταλαίπωρον χάριν*, *Hecuba* 25), we may imagine the sea passage as a symbolic Acheron, where the ships that transport the spoils of victory and hubris, symbolized by gold, become the boats that lead the Greek army to its demise.

When Athene secures Poseidon's assistance, he immediately organizes the destruction, which he intends to inflict, giving her a detailed description of his plan. Poseidon tells Athene that he 'shall whip up the Aegean sea' (ταράξω πέλαγος Αἰγαίας ἁλός, *Trojan Women* 88) and that the shores and the rocks of many islands, as well as the promontories of Caphareus,[78] 'will hold the corpses of many dead men' (*πολλῶν θανόντων σώμαθ' ἕξουσιν νεκρῶν*, *Trojan Women* 91). This 'programmatic speech'[79] refers to events, which will take place after the end of the play,[80] and therefore events, which will not affect the development of the narrative. However, as we have suggested, the prologue speeches of the play create a tragic irony in the way in which the audience understand them.

The bleak side of the sea is reflected in *Hecuba* when the waves wash up Polydorus's corpse on the shore. He is present in the theatrical landscape twice. Initially he appears as a spectre, and then as a veiled corpse carried by the attendants

[78] Among other islands listed, Poseidon mentions the promontories of Caphareus on the island of Euboea. Goff (2009, 41) suggests that this reference is connected with *Palamedes*, the second play of the trilogy which includes, apart from *Trojan Women, Alexander* and the lost satyr play *Sisyphus.* In *Palamedes*, Palamedes' father Nauplius, learning about his son's unjust murder at Troy, promises to light misleading beacons on the headlands of Caphareus in order to lure the Greek fleet to destruction and death.
[79] Goff (2009, 41).
[80] Merridor (1984, 208-9) points out that these events as stated both by Poseidon, in the prologue, and Cassandra, in her prophetic words, 'are not accepted as valid by those affected'.

(*Hecuba* 657) of Hecuba's serving woman, and remaining on stage 'until the very end of the play'.[81]

The aesthetic of the dead body produces a powerful effect on the perspective of the audience, depending on its varying representations in different performances of ancient Greek drama. Corpses represent the absence of life. The lifeless body continuously reminds the viewer of its non-existence. It can function as 'the living proof' of the dead person's absence. Thus, in *Trojan Women,* Euripides presents on stage the corpse of Astyanax on his dead father's shield. In *Hecuba,* Polydorus, youthful and single, similarly maintains the vulnerability and innocence of a child. He was sent on a journey of escape in his childhood in order to avoid an unjust death, but the journey, like that of the Trojan son of Hector Astyanax, did not enable his 'escape' from destiny.

The exposed dead body of Polydorus lingering between the world of the dead and the living, demands burial, yet this request remains unfulfilled, and the corpse remains as a presence, which overshadows the entire narrative.[82] Through its silence and immobility it seems to cry out for burial and its final passage to Hades. The sea will, here, be a place of death for the Argives' military force and it is a temporary space of abandonment and exposure for a murdered mortal.[83] The sea cannot be a tomb, but

[81] Mossman (1995, 60) notes that Polydorus' corpse is present on stage from the moment it is introduced until the end. It could be another example of an element which supplies unity to the action of the play which some critics find disconnected. This symbolic appearance has multiple dramatic functions: as a constant reminder of the horrible crime of Polymestor, and also as legitimate proof of Hecuba's harsh revenge.

[82] Zeitlin (1991, 82), points out that the 'body is no more than an inert and defenseless object, and for this reason, requires cultural intervention to certify the new status of the self in relation to the living and its former life'.

[83] Lindenlauf (2004, 421) citing Antiphon (*On the murder of Heracles*, 39) which says that the victims of murder were also thrown into the depths of the sea to cover up the marks of a crime, observes that in the Greek society, this was an unjust denial of the human's right to be buried and hence 'a horrendous and socially unacceptable crime'.

rather a temporary home; in the one case this is so for divine revenge to be exercised upon the victims,

ὡς ἂν τὸ λοιπὸν τἄμ' ἀνάκτορ' εὐσεβεῖν

εἰδῶσ' Ἀχαιοί, θεούς τε τοὺς ἄλλους σέβειν.

so that for the future the Achaeans may learn to revere

my sanctuaries and respect the other gods

(*Trojan Women* 85-6)

while in Polydorus's case, it is a temporary home for the victim of a murder.

ξένος πατρῷος καὶ κτανὼν ἐς οἶδμ' ἁλὸς

μεθῆχ', ἵν' αὐτὸς χρυσὸν ἐν δόμοις ἔχῃ.

my father's guest and friend killed me and flung me into

the surging salty sea so that he could keep the gold

in his own house

(*Hecuba* 26-7)

The dead bodies, surfacing on the sea, thus maintain an unfulfilled power, one against which it is impossible to erect defences.[84] The bodies are kept waiting until the

[84] Rehm (2002, 170) supports the dynamics of the dead body in the space of tragedy. He observes that 'dead bodies possess a special power to transform the spaces of tragedy, because the human corpse (as such) does not revert immediately to nature, but remains part of culture'.

burial, which is the final destination of the human body according to the social and religious prescriptions of ancient Greek civilization.

The corpse of Polydorus is exposed to an outlandish place for three days (*τριταῖον ἤδη φέγγος*, *Hecuba* 32). This offers a symbolic parallel with the wandering heroes of the myth, who are struggling to survive in foreign lands and desire to return home.[85] The spectre of Polydorus, after his temporary sea journey, asks for burial through his presence on stage. It is an attempt to maintain his right to be part of a civilized world, the ideological framework of the ancient Greek world trying to impose the moral order of a civic institution on a barbaric landscape. Polydorus confronts human atrocities twice: he is destroyed by his enemies, and he is betrayed by his friends.

In *Trojan Women,* Poseidon recalls another poetic image of mourning which is associated with a watery landscape, a synecdoche of the once mighty Troy. On the banks of river Scamander, captive women are weeping for the destruction of their land and the loss of their livelihoods. In Greek tragedy, the geographical references, presupposing a pre-existing mythical, epic, and historical framework, function in many ways as symbols. The most striking example of association between a river and death is characteristically identified in the *Iliad* where Achilles fills the Scamander with the corpses of Trojan soldiers:

ὣς ὑπ' Ἀχιλλῆος Ξάνθου βαθυδινήεντος

πλῆτο ῥόος κελάδων ἐπιμὶξ ἵππων τε καὶ ἀνδρῶν.

[85] According to Croally (1994, 168), myths of wandering heroes 'through outlandish places without cities and with different customs reinforce the idea of *polis*'.

> even so, before Achilles was the sounding stream of deep-eddying Xanthus filled confusedly with chariots and with men.
>
> Homer *Iliad* (21, 15-16)

This epic image is vividly revived in the framework of the Greek tragedy,[86] and particularly in *Trojan Women,* where the Scamander echoes (*βοᾷι*, *Trojan Women* 29) the cries of female captives facing enslavement under their masters.[87] This is the same location where the Greeks arrived (*ἐπεὶ δ' ἐπ' ἀκτὰς ἦλυθον Σκαμανδρίους*, *Trojan Women* 374) ten years earlier for the sake of a woman (*γυναικὸς οὕνεκα*, *Trojan Women* 372), and the same place where Astyanax receives his burial bath, the ritual purification of an innocent child.[88] Talthybius reassures his grandmother Hecuba that he 'bathed the corpse and washed the blood from the wounds' (*ἔλουσα νεκρὸν κἀπένιψα τραύματα*, *Trojan Women* 1152).

Another stream that marks the Greeks' arrival in Trojan territory, though in a faraway mythical era, is the Simois.[89] In his description, with its epic tonality, Euripides recalls Telamon and Hercules's 'sea-voyaging' oar (*ποντοπόρον*, *Trojan Women* 811), which is anchoring on the bank of the 'fair flowing Simois' (*Σιμόεντι δ' ἐπ' εὐρείτᾳ πλάταν*, *Trojan Women* 810) causing the sack of Troy (*Τροίας ἐπόρθησε χθόνα*, *Trojan Women* 816). The stream's estuaries can be seen as a transition zone between the river and a maritime environment, which connects them with the onset of disaster and death.

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[86] Scamander is referred to in Aeschylus' *Agamemnon, Libation Bearers, Eumenides*; in Euripides' *Cyclops, Orestes, Trojan Women* and in Sophocles' *Ajax*.

[87] O' Neill (1941, 304) argues that Scamander, personified as a river god, laments the destruction of Troy and might not leave his stream (as Poseidon does, leaving his beloved city behind) and therefore, facing 'endless future in a desolated land'.

[88] As the first name of Astyanax was Scamandrios, It is plausible to conjecture that this identification may foreshadow his fatal fate.

[89] A small river, which rises in Mount Ida, passes through the plain of Troy and joins the river Scamander before they both flow into the Aegean. As Mossman (1995, 84) has indicated, by mentioning both Simois (*Hecuba* 641) and Eurotas (*Hecuba* 650), Euripides underlines the bond between Trojan and Spartan women.

These estuaries become the seashores that cry out 'like a bird keening for its young, here for husbands, here for children, here for aged mothers' (*ἴακχον οἰωνὸς οἵ/ ον τεκέων ὕπερ βοᾷ,/ ᾗ μὲν εὐνάτορας, ᾗ δὲ παῖδας,/ ᾗ δὲ ματέρας γεραιάς*, *Trojan Women* 826-32). Various connotations may be identified at this point. The watery environment of the rivers, as well as the seashores, remind the audience of slaughter, sounds of lamentation, and rites of purification. The rivers of the underworld are vividly transformed into landscapes filled with exposed corpses.[90]

Although many of the deaths are portrayed outside of the theatrical space, through poetic descriptions and lyric lamentations, the staging of death is an issue which is fundamental to theatrical practice in ancient Greek tragedy. An especially revealing example is the appearance of a dead character as a ghost on stage. In *Hecuba* the entrance of Polydorus' ghost offers various different points of interpretation.

2.1.3 Polydorus' Entrance

The polysemy and ambiguity of tragedy could create an open space of illustrative and suggestive, but certainly not restrictive, interpretations. In Greek tragedies the connection between history and myth and the multiple symbolic words and actions, allow us to elaborate upon motifs that suggest 'readings' which the text addresses and that the dynamics of theatrical performance could represent. Contrary to audience's expectations (*para prosdokian*), the performance could reveal the innovative ideas which may lie between the lines of the text.

[90]Due (2006, 152) observes that 'Cassandra in *Agamemnon* (1156-61) contrasts her imminent death and existence along the rivers of the underworld with her childhood in Troy along the banks of Scamander'.

Over the years scholars have proposed various theories concerning the entrance, and spatial presence of the ghost of Polydorus in *Hecuba*.[91] Taking into account the dramatic framework and the architectural structures of ancient Greek theatre, one could suggest further analysis of the spectre of the 'disembodied voice',[92] which haunts the play and the stage and demands we consider how such a metaphysical figure is performed.

In *Hecuba*, the shade of Polydorus 'flits above' his mother (*αἰωρούμενος*, *Hecuba* 32) defying his right to be buried, while the ghost of Achilles in Hecuba's 'nocturnal visions',[93] standing above his tomb, demands as a 'gift of honor' (*γέρας, Hecuba* 94) one of the 'hard suffering Trojan women' (*τῶν πολυμόχθων τινὰ Τρωιάδων, Hecuba* 95). Hecuba mentions in her speech that the Earth, mother of 'black-winged dreams' (*μελανοπτερύγων μῆτερ ὀνείρων*, *Hecuba* 71), has sent to her the image of Achilles's ghost, while the audience earlier witnesses the ghost of her dead son on stage.

The difference between the two spectres of Polydorus and Achilles, besides the desire that justifies their appearance, is further enhanced by their spatial presence. Although the spectre of Achilles is continuously involved in the dramatic field of the play, it remains in an extra-scenic space. In contrast, Polydorus appears on stage twice: at the beginning of the play (*Hecuba* 1-58) as a wraith, and in the subsequent display (*Hecuba* 657-1295) of his inanimate corpse. Achilles's appearance above 'the topmost crest of his tomb' (*ἦλθ' ὑπὲρ ἄκρας τύμβου κορυφᾶς, Hecuba* 93) is 'ironically contrasted'[94] with Polydorus' wandering figure seeking to fall into his 'mother's hands

[91]Collard (1991), Gellie (1980), Gregory (1999), Hourmouziades (1965), Kovacks (1995), Lane (2007), Mastronarde (1990), Mossman (1995), Rehm (2002).
[92] Meltzer (2006, 115).
[93] Segal (1989, 31).
[94] Zeitlin (1991, 82).

and to be buried in a tomb' (*τύμβου κυρῆσαι κἀς χέρας μητρὸς πεσεῖν, Hecuba* 50). This difference further enhances the probability of a stage (*skene*) level entrance of Polydorus. If Poseidon in *Trojan Women* occupies the position of a speaking god on an elevated level such as the *theologeion* and the Greek hero of the Trojan War in *Hecuba* an intermediate space between the gods and mortals, then one could argue that the vulnerable Polydorus declares his mortality via his appearance on the level of the *skene*.[95]

Indeed, Polydorus' entrance has received sustained critical attention. Scholars have made certain assumptions suggesting that the ghost delivers the prologue from above the stage, on the roof of the stage,[96] a place often occupied by supernatural characters. Although this chapter has sought to locate the links between Poseidon in *Trojan Women* and Polydorus in *Hecuba*, their spatial positioning in the respective prologues is different, due to the hierarchical distinctions between them.

Polydorus's prophetic words provide yet another example of a tragic character with predictive abilities. His metaphysical arrival suggests neither a supernatural origin nor a position on an elevated level. He is an unprotected body at the mercy of nature and his destiny. Although Polydorous manages to 'prevail' upon the merciful chthonic gods who allow him to visit the world of mortals temporarily, it is not expected for him to hold a divine position.

Furthermore, the dramatic effectiveness of the speaking ghost of Polydorus interacts with the visible power of his silent body, creating their reciprocal relationship. The mask, as a visual sign of theatrical identity, is an indisputable token of recognition

[95] We should also mention that we couldn't be sure where Poseidon and Athena were positioned in *Trojan Women*.
[96] Collard (1991), Gregory (1999), Jouanna (1982), Kovacks (1995), Lane (2007), Mastronarde (1990), Mossman (1995).

connecting these two bodies on stage. However, in approaching the stage in two different ways, both sharing the sea-*parodos* as their point of departure, the two bodies will urge the audience to reflect upon the boundaries between life and death. Hourmouziades supports the suggestion that Polydorus voices the prologue on the same level of the set as Hecuba, and suspects the probability that 'the actor used the one of the two *parodoi* - presumably the one pointing to the 'sea' – for his entrance as well as for his departure'.[97]

Reinforcing this argument, it could be suggested that a theatrical character so closely connected to the sea, which functions as a host to his corpse, probably comes from the sea utilising the *parodos* as a linking pathway between the stage and the seashore. Polydorus, in the prologue, makes a temporary return journey from the 'Gates of darkness' through the watery passage of Acheron onto the 'mortal' stage level. Here he is leaving again in order to 'embody' his lifeless corpse, and to return again, through the stage, to his final destination.

A lack of wind (*apnea*) interrupts the return voyage of the Greeks. The fleet is anchored at the Thracian Chersonese and the gods create the appropriate conditions in order to favour Hecuba's act of revenge.[98] The desire of the Greek hero Achilles for '*geras*',[99] the recognition of Polydorus, and the sacrifice of Polyxena,[100] are parts of a succession of events that begin with a body arriving alone by sea and then the group of

[97] Hourmouziades (1965, 160). Also Lane (2007, 200) argues that Polydorus does not appear at height.
[98] Kovacks (1987, 145) gives a convincing interpretation, writing that 'it is the gods who favor Hecuba's scheme' and not Achilles who prevents the fleet from sailing by stilling the winds. Although what Gregory (1997, 114-5) suggests regarding Euripides' indirectness of expression that 'may reflect a certain tension between two available explanations of windlessness, the mythical and naturalistic' is more accepted.
[99] Vernant (1991, 53) defines *geras* as 'an extraordinary privilege granted under exceptional circumstances; it acknowledges superiority, either in rank, or in status or in valor and daring'. Furthermore, it was considered a virtue whereby the more *geras* (old age) a man acquired, the more *kleos* (fame) and *arete* (excellence and courage) he was considered to have.
[100] The cost of a girl's innocent life, as a prerequisite for the departure of a journey, is a mirror scene with the sacrifice of Iphigenia in Aulis.

Greek soldiers and Trojan captive women departing to the seashore following the end of the play.

Everyone follows the passage to the sea. This dramatic representation of departure shortly after the end of the play, acquires a symbolic status in the audience's imagination, since, at the very beginning, they witness the voice of a soulless body arriving by the same passage.

In Euripides' *Hecuba* and *Trojan Women*, the sea is an open-ended place with inherent possibilities and limits. Above all, the sea recalls the weakness of mortals. Man is exposed to the mercy of nature, the gods and destiny (*moira*). In Greek tragedy however, these supernatural and incomprehensible powers show no mercy. After the conclusive departure, the coast remains an isolated space. Memory acquires material existence in this corrupt landscape, amidst the tombs of the dead and the destroyed shrines of the gods.

2.1.4 Memory spaces

Poseidon and Polydorus's presence in the prologue of both plays establishes the transition from a general, cosmic and metaphysical landscape into a particular, fictional and visible theatrical world. The other and unfamiliar becomes human and tangible. Both characters' journey from the sea to the land also suggests a common emotional modality. Poseidon in *Trojan Women* states 'the city of the Phrygians has never left my heart' (*ὔποτ' ἐκ φρενῶν εὔνοι' ἀπέστη τῶν ἐμῶν Φρυγῶν πόλει*, *Trojan Women* 6-7); while Polydorus in *Hecuba* seeking Hecuba's maternal protection reports the destruction of Troy and the loss of Hector's life (*ἐπεὶ δὲ Τροία θ' Ἕκτορός τ' ἀπόλλυται*

ψυχή, *Hecuba* 21-2). They both describe the loss and desolation of their beloved cities, but without ever expressing any feeling of longing or wish for homecoming (*nostos*).

Their common aspiration, however, is the establishment of a space of remembrance and symbolic eternity, which would function as a locus of worship for Poseidon and of honour and peace for Polydorus. The word *eremia* (peace) denotes an image of abandonment and desolation.[101] In a solitary landscape, there is nobody to worship the gods and to mourn the mortals. Nonetheless, these two characters clearly articulate their desire for a space of memory.

The deity wishes to denote his physical presence in the mortal world, in the exact same way that the mortal yearns for a way of passage into eternity. It may therefore be asserted that both mortals and immortals aspire to express their presence through their absence. The altar of the gods, like the tomb, is a place that connects the real with the metaphysical; a locus exposed in nature, simultaneously encompassing the human and the divine; a symbol of remembrance and, in essence, of longing for eternity; a signifier of the futility of human life and a reminder of its finite nature. Divine nature necessitates a reciprocal process of actions, evident in - or rather instructed by - religious ritual. The infinity of a god's substance gratifies itself through the mortal's need to exist. Poseidon abandons Troy, because as a god he is in constant need of a social space, whereas a grave - even in a desolate area - is an adequate locus of eternal residence for the mortal human body.

[101] Hourmouziades (1965, 303).

2.2 The seashore as a boundary between home and exile

In *Hecuba* and *Trojan Women*, the drama is characterized by some common themes that define the evolution of the dramaturgy. Despite individual differences, the two plays have as their central mythological background, in terms of motifs and characteristics, the destruction of Troy and the imminent transition of two heterogeneous groups from a deserted and looted landscape to Greece.

The geographical and temporal differences of each tragedy should be considered on the basis of the text itself in its particular references either directly or indirectly. In the case of *Trojan Women*, the theatrical locus of action is the military camp of the Greeks, near Troy. Given the parameters of the dramatic spaces (Troy, ships ready to sail), as well as the architectural parameters (*parodoi*), which by way of entrances and exits delimit both these spaces in the ancient Greek theatre, we may situate the army's concentration camp between Troy and the coast.

Although the coast is not defined as the place of action, the imminent departure creates a sense of proximity between the sea and the Greek camp. This is continuously reinforced in the play through the many references to the arrival of the ships in the anchorage of the rivers and the shores during the beginning of the expedition, aiding the creation in the audience's imagination of an image of a city that is surrounded by water.

Through these references, the sea and the rivers surrounding Troy become the bearers of an ominous and hostile force, resulting in war and the destruction of Troy. In spite of the beauty that the choral odes convey, when captive women praise the beauties of the past, they do not cease to portray indirectly a vulnerable image of nature as unable to resist human intervention. The ships' invasion into the gulfs surrounding Troy

serves to indirectly remind the audience of the imagery of polarization between the masculine Greek and the feminine 'other'.[102]

While still focusing on *Trojan Women*, it should be noted that the events transpire directly after the fall of the city, and the action, while still retaining an agonizing and expectant awareness of the departure, is marked by the brutalities of the Greeks and the final destruction of a town that was formerly powerful.[103]

In *Hecuba*, Euripides shifts the events to a barbarian territory, creating a temporal and spatial distance. The trip has already begun, and both the Greek army and the Trojan women camp at the shores of the Thracian Chersonese. The lack of favourable winds keeps the ships of the Greeks ashore and prevents the continuation of their voyage to Greece. The scenic space is defined by the army camp and the tents of the captive women.[104] Similar to the pattern in *Trojan Women*, the two *parodoi* are defined by the narrative. In one *parodos*, the road leads to Achilles's tomb, while in the other it leads to the sea.[105] In *Hecuba*, there is a more emphatic connection with the shore and, although it is delineated as an extra-scenic theatrical space, it remains at a near distance, allowing us thus to characterize the shores of the Thracian Chersonese as an extended dramatic space for the play's action.

[102] For the polarization between masculine Greeks and effeminate barbarians as images of ethnic self-definition, see Hall (1989, 97-100) and (1996, 5-6).
[103] Goff (2009, 14) mentions that in *Hecuba* none of the actions were meant to happen; in contrast to *Trojan Women* where actions are organized by the Greek generals.
[104] Abrahamson (1952, 121) calls *Hecuba* a 'concentration camp' play and also a 'prisoner's tragedy'. Also, Rehm (2002, 177) defines the setting of the play as a 'transit camp' which constitutes a 'moral no man's land'; and Zeitlin (1991, 83) illustrates it as a 'sinister place' and a 'site of death'. However Segal (1990, 111) claims that according to Herodotus (6.34-41), 'the Thracian Chersonese, though important and familiar to Athenians from at least the sixth century, is also remote enough to function symbolically as a kind of moral no-man's land'.
[105] Croally (1994, 199) reports that all characters at the end of the play leave by the *parodos* which leads to the Greek ships and to final departure, except the Trojan Astyanax who returns to the city for his execution.

The stage creates a passage between the two *parodoi*: a landscape which at the end of the play will remain deserted but is temporarily inhabited by soldiers and captive women, and the sea that will function as a place of transition for this mixed population towards another destination. Therefore, the theatre stage functions as a shore, as a symbolic borderline. The arrival and departure of the two ships mark the beginning and the end of the war in the two tragedies, poetically culminating in the entrance of the Trojan Horse that arrives like a ship into Troy and announces the beginning of the looting of the city. The destruction of Troy results in the killing of the Trojans, an uncertain homeward journey for the Greeks, and in captivity for the Trojan women.

The seashore acquires two contradictory features. For the Greek army, it becomes the place of departure for their homeland (*nostos*); and for the Trojan women the start of a journey of no return, a journey to an unknown future that is the origin of their own nostalgia.[106] Singing their misfortune, under unprecedented conditions, the Trojan women recollect the dear city of their earlier life. Their nostalgic odes are an attempt to escape from their undesirable current situation and a way to exorcize their fears, even though all their memories are covered by the 'cloud of the Greeks' (*Ἑλλάνων νέφος*, *Hecuba* 907) that has ravaged Ilium.

It may be suggested that in *Trojan Women*, in which the events take place immediately after the war, the chorus's descriptions of the ruined city evoke exclusively painful memories of loss and loneliness. In *Hecuba*, however, although the captive women face the same situation, the time and the distance increase the emotion of nostalgia, evoking, apart from a portrayal of total destruction, images of peacefulness.

[106] Meltzer (2006, 33) suggests a definition of nostalgia as 'a painful yearning for a return home' derived from the Greek words *nostos* (return) and *algos* (pain). In this case the use of the word expresses the feeling of slight sadness and the sentimental longing for things, persons or events of the past. As Boym (2001, xiii-xiv) states, 'the term was coined in 1688 by the young Swiss medical student Johhanes Hofer (1669-1752) in order to describe the anxieties displayed by Swiss mercenaries fighting away from home'.

These nostalgic references, in contrast to the naturalistic landscape of the seashore, create a transition from the past to the future, from freedom to enslavement, from home to exile. The private interior of the tents may be associated with the interior chambers but in a different way. The interior is transformed from a space of peacefulness and security to a scene of a crime. In the choral ode, the Trojan women describe the night of Troy's fall as follows:

μεσονύκτιος ὠλλύμαν,

ἦμος ἐκ δείπνων ὕπνος ἡδὺς ἐπ' ὄσσοις

σκίδναται, μολπᾶν δ' ἄπο καὶ χοροποιῶν

θυσιᾶν καταλύσας

πόσις ἐν θαλάμοις ἔκειτο

It was at midnight that my doom began,

when dinner was over and sweet sleep

spread over the eyes; and my husband

had ceased from his songs and his choral sacrifices

(*Hecuba* 914-920)

But the battle cries of the Greeks' invasion, coupled with the image of their dead husbands and their enforced exile, shift their mood from joy to sorrow,

ἐπεὶ νόστιμον

ναῦς ἐκίνησεν πόδα καί μ' ἀπὸ γᾶς

ὥρισεν Ἰλιάδος:

τάλαιν', ἀπεῖπον ἄλγει,

and while I looked back at the city

when the ships set their homeward course

and parted me from the land of Ilium,

I fainted in my agony of grief

(*Hecuba*, 939-942)

then from sorrow to anger at Helen's marriage with Paris, which caused the loss of their fatherland:

ἂν μήτε πέλαγος ἅλιον ἀπαγάγοι πάλιν,

μήτε πα-

τρῷον ἵκοιτ' ἐς οἶκον.

may the salty sea never carry her back!

May she never come to the house of her fathers!

(*Hecuba*, 950-951)

At the end of the play, when they attack Polymestor and his sons, it is this anger that transforms these women into 'hellish Bacchae' (*Βάκχαις Ἅιδου*, *Hecuba* 1076),[107] and the interior becomes once more the domain of female domination.[108] Having left the tents, the women become captives and slaves anew. The concept of freedom could not function in an external space, let alone in a foreign land.[109] In their real and symbolic 'captivity', the women conserve only one of their 'last substantial pleasures':[110] their imagination.

The chorus in the orchestra, through imaginative narrations, portrays the chronicle of the disaster. The sea, just off-stage, surrounds them as a form of separation, evoking feelings of grief and desperation. From the perspective of the audience, the distinction between the Athenian *polis* and a mythical city that no longer exists is profound. The seashore is defined as a destination that uniquely offers, to the captive and vulnerable survivors, the only choice they have between life and death: their exile.

Taking into account this sea-journey as a passage to exile, it is of great importance to mention how the coast, in this remote fictional world, functions as a boundary between the constitution of the *polis* and the realm of the sea as an unbounded space, which is identified with the dangers and the uncertainties of a world outside of the defined structure of a civilized city.[111]

[107] Segal (1989, 18) observes the resemblance of this deed to the Dionysiac *sparagmos* ('tearing apart' of the body of the victim).
[108] According to Segal (1990, 125) 'the offstage space in tragedy, often representing the interior of the house or palace, functions as the space of the irrational or the aspects of personality that are hidden, dark, and fearful. It is often the place of female sexuality, deceit, and revenge'.
[109] Croally (1994, 205) points out that after the Trojan women's dispersal as slaves throughout the Greek territory, their status inside the house will be changed, reconstituting 'the criteria for inclusion'.
[110] Barlow (2008, xiii).
[111] Rehm (2002, 177) argues that in this space 'civilized values of *polis* cannot be guaranteed'.

The space of the stage, through a temporary theatrical illusion, serves as an intermediate and limited setting between two opposing extra-scenic images.[112] The audience present also forms a part of this border zone between the *polis* and the sea, identity and primitive instincts, the familiar and the unpredictable. If the *polis* constitutes an ideal space and justifies the progress of human civilization in the ancient Greek world of the fifth century, the sea is a space where humans are exposed to nature, excluded and unprotected.

The theatre becomes the central demarcation between two poles and the audience forms a part of this bipolarity. The passage from the outside to the enclosed city symbolically necessitates the transition from an independent and neutral state, to a formal political organization and a structured religious institution. The journey in question may be seen therefore as a process of self-criticism for the Greek army and as a redefinition of the identity of the captive women, through the passage from the burning Troy to places of exile.

2.3 Spaces of Exile

In the time of Cimon, Polygnotus, a famous Greek painter of the first half of the fifth century BC, provides the Athenians with a painted illustration of events that was inspired by the destruction of Troy and its aftermath. His large monumental wall paintings in the *Painted Stoa* (*Stoa Poikile*) in Athens and his frescoes in the hall of the *Cnidian Lesche* in Delphi, have not survived, but Pausanias, a Greek traveller and geographer of the second century AD, gives a detailed description, reviving these two versions of the story, which concern, among other mythical and historical themes, the

[112] Padel (1990, 364) states that 'the inside and outside of the theatre's offers the watching imagination a way of thinking about the inside and outside of other structures important to tragedy: city, house, self'.

Iliupersis and particularly the suffering and lamentation of the Trojan women.[113] The presented image portrays this significant moment in the lives of the Trojan women as verging between the past and an ambivalent future in exile. It is of a great concern to mention the active engagement of Euripides' audience with these visual images of art. The prominent aesthetic and artistic creativity of this period becomes not only part of cultural and communal memory but also another visual perception of myth and history in everyday life.[114]

The motif of metamorphosis in *Hecuba* and *Trojan Women* is prominent in many different aspects of such visual interpretations. Troy is transformed into ashes; inhabited places are turned into isolated landscapes, while mortals are transfigured into ghosts, maenads or landmarks. This section examines, then, how the emotions of loss, fear, and despair of the captive women of Troy create, through their choral odes, the scenery of a faraway world. Between the nostalgic past and the unknown future, the sea is their passage and the boundary that they must cross. The time of their journey, which began after the fall of Troy and lasts until they reach their destinations in Greece is, for these captive women, a period of heightened awareness, which evokes unrealistic reflections, conjecture and subtle hidden hopes for a better fortune as slaves.

What Homer defines as a 'day of slavery' (*ēmar anankaion*) [115] is extended to a 'life of slavery'. Their home city, the environment of their previous life, does not exist, whilst their future destinations exist only as a part of a realm of fantasy. It could be suggested, thus, that the chorus, through their appealing descriptions, romanticize their future lives in order to satisfy the audience's sanitized image of self-identity.

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[113] Pausanias, *Descriptions of Greece* (1.15.1-3, 10.25.4, 10.25.9, 10.26.1).
[114] For the reciprocal influences between the visual and dramatic arts and the interplay between illusion and reality see Zeitlin's work: 'The Artful Eye: Vision, Ekphrasis, and Spectacle in Euripidean Drama' in *Art and Text in Ancient Greek Culture*, edited by Simon Goldhill and Robin Osborne, 138-96. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994.
[115] Homer, *Iliad* (16.831, 836).

The depiction of Greece, through the chorus's extended references to many possible cities of exile, frames the motif of enslavement into a limited geographical region. In *Trojan Women* these places, although uncertain for the allotted or non-allotted captive women, become more specific for the individual characters. Greek heroes and generals of the war take the noble women of the Priamid family as a prize of honour. After Hecuba's interrogation, which epitomizes and culminates in the agony the chorus feel about their enforced allocation in the *parodos,* Talthybius, the Greek herald, offers a detailed description of the old Queen's and the princesses' future.

Initially, Talthybius clarifies that 'each woman was assigned to a different man' and 'not allocated altogether' (*κατ' ἄνδρ' ἑκάστη κοὐχ ὁμοῦ λελόγχατε*, *Trojan Women* 242). Then he testifies that he has all the information required, but suggests to Hecuba 'to ask each individual, not everyone together' (*οἶδ': ἀλλ' ἕκαστα πυνθάνου, μὴ πάνθ' ὁμοῦ, Trojan Women* 246). In response to Hecuba's following questions, Talthybius links the captor's names with the noble women's future. Cassandra will become Agamemnon's bride 'in a clandestine union' (*λέκτρων σκότια νυμφευτήρια*, *Trojan Women* 252), and Andromache will be taken as a prize by Achilles's son. Talthybius mentions that as regards the two of them who are not yet allotted, Polyxena's assignment is to serve the tomb of Achilles (*τύμβῳ τέτακται προσπολεῖν Ἀχιλλέως*, *Trojan Women* 264). For Hecuba, the future holds the most undesirable fate (*moira*). She is to be taken as slave by the king of Ithaca, Odysseus.

After Hecuba's song lamenting her evil fate, the Trojan women ask about their own fortunes, and despite the speculations cited in the *parodos,* they never receive an answer.[116] The future remains unknown, augmenting the feelings of anxiety and desperation for the anonymous female group. The *parodos* in *Trojan Women*

[116] Morwood (2000, 134).

encompasses, in a more specific way, the women's expectations. In multiple instances, they are described, either directly or via allusion as follows: 'the sacred water of Pirene' (Corinth);[117] 'the blessed land of Theseus' (Athens); 'the swirling waters of Eurotas' (Sparta); 'the holy land of Peneus' (Thessaly); 'the land of Etna across the sea from Carthage'; and also 'the land near the Ionian sea that Crathis, the loveliest of rivers, waters, a country of fine men' (*Trojan Women* 205-223).

This world of the 'elsewhere' reconstitutes another environment in which the Trojan women hope to be safer and which is more sympathetic than their current situation.[118] It may be pointed out that in almost all of the named regions of imagined escapism, there is a reference to the sea or a river, which is closely connected with these places of exile. Through these poetic images of nature, which in many cases function as the author's political comments on the topic of war,[119] or contemporary events,[120] the sea and rivers transform constrained human spaces into a less conventional image of captivity.

It is a common and effective technique in Greek tragedy that rivers and the sea are understood as allusions to cities, or are used as spaces closely connected with heroes and gods. In *Trojan Women,* these references have the ability to evoke feelings alternating between anger, hope and despair, particularly during the ode of the chorus about the distant localities of Greece. Allies, colonies, hostile rivalries and upcoming campaigns, are also implied. Athens, the 'blessed', 'sacred and holy land' (*εὐδαίμονα* and *ἱερὰν Θησέως ζαθέαν*, *Trojan Women* 209 and 218-9) of the mythical king Theseus,

[117] For Tyrell (as cited in Lee 1976, 103) 'drawing water was the typical employment of slaves'.
[118] Foley (2003, 24).
[119] Easterling and Knox (1985, 332-360).
[120] Westlake (1953, 181 ff.).

is twice referred to by the chorus as the ideal destination, and as their first choice of a place of exile.[121]

The dispersal of the women in islands and cities, washed by rivers and the sea, ironically evokes the image of the corpses of the Greek soldiers filling the shores of the Aegean that Poseidon and Athena eagerly planned in the prologue of the play (*Trojan Women* 77-97). Euripides charts a broader geographical map, probably an 'imperialistic' one, from Troy to Sicily, simultaneously characterising the aftermath of the war as an indirect warning. The sea, rivers and springs feature a continuous fluctuation which serves as a reminder of the transience of humanity, of life changes and of the unforeseen future.

Equally, in the first *stasimon* of Euripides's *Hecuba* (444-483), the chorus speculates about their future servitude in potential Greek destinations. The ocean breeze speeds along the ships which transport them to their enslavement. References to places become more general. With the power of their minds they break the bondage of enslavement and travel to the Peloponnese (*Δωρίδος ὅρμον αἴας*, *Hecuba* 450), to Pythia in Thessaly, 'marked often in Greek poetry'[122] by the river Apidanus (*Φθιάδος, ἔνθα τὸν /καλλίστων ὑδάτων πατέρα /φασὶν Ἀπιδανὸν πεδία λιπαίνειν*, *Hecuba* 450-452), to unnamed islands (*νάσων, Hecuba* 455), to Delos as a vision of service to Artemis[123] (*σὺν Δηλιάσιν τε κού-/ ραισιν Ἀρτέμιδος θεᾶς*, *Hecuba* 463-464) and prominently to the city of Pallas, Athens (*ἢ Παλλάδος ἐν πόλει / τὰς καλλιδίφρους Ἀθα-/ναίας*, *Hecuba* 466-467).

[121] Similar images of the 'gleaming' Athens are repeated in the second *stasimon* of the chorus that depicts the arrival of Heracles and Telamon in Troy as the beginning of its first destruction. Salamis, the kingdom of Telamon is also mentioned as closely connected to Athens, and a place of another Greek victory.
[122] Mossman (1995, 79).
[123] Mossman (1995, 80).

In contrast with Polyxena's freedom in death, the choruses' journey follows a different path. Leaving Asia behind, instead of Hades, they cross the borders and travel to the 'foreign land' of Europe (*ξείναι χθονὶ*, *Hecuba* 480).[124] Although the three *stasima* are connected by the pervading imagery of sea voyages,[125] the first provides more specific details about where on the mainland, in the Aegean islands, or in Athens, the Trojan women will find 'light relief' from their misfortunes.[126]

Gregory rightly observes that the women's journey in the first *stasimon* in *Hecuba*, starting from Troy and closing by returning there, is composed as a ring-structure.[127] It is obvious that what they hope for is an unrealistic desire for their future. Troy is equated with death and the chorus chooses to live, rather than die.[128] The geographical references to possible destinations that harbour the captive women's grief, construct a vision of religious ceremonies in Athena's honour, where maidens participate in embroidering her *peplos* (*ἐν κροκέῳ πέπλῳ/ ζεύξομαι, Hecuba* 468-469), or in the praise of Artemis in Delos (*Hecuba* 463-464). Even though the inconsistency between the wishes of the captive women and their identity as married women, is obvious,[129] simultaneously a challenge is posed suggesting that this liminal situation could be characterized as a symbolic rite of passage.

Arnold van Gennep in his seminal work *The Rites of Passage*, classifies the initiatory rituals in three different stages: rites of separation, transition rites, and rites of incorporation.[130] Taking into account the destruction of the Trojan women's previous life, their imminent voyage to Greece could easily be identified as a procedure of

[124] Rosivach (1975, 358).
[125] Collard (1991, 152).
[126] I accept Mossman's (1995, 78) suggestion that there is an underlying solace and Harrison's (2008, 40) claim that the Greek place names, although they add an exotic colour, offer no relief.
[127] Gregory (1997, 97).
[128] Rosivach (1975, 358).
[129] Wilamowitz (1906, 269).
[130] Van Gennep A. (1909) *Les rites de passage* (as cited in Padilla 1999, 15).

transition. Losing their identities, women pass to a new stage of life, and this transition is marked by a symbolic death and a subsequent rebirth. The journey into exile, in comparison with these rites, contains separation, transformation via a liminal stage and a kind of a new incorporation.

Past, present and future coincide during the Trojan women's stay on the seashore. On this verge of the land, they remember the painful moments of the war and the night of happiness together with their husbands and look forward to their roles as slaves in a foreign land. The Trojan women re-acquire the unprotected status of a young maiden and the vulnerability of their youth. Without husbands, children and families they become part of an unwilling procedure forcing them to leave the familiar and venture into the unknown.

Furthermore, another significant similarity here is that several rites of passage are usually accompanied by violent acts, particularly involving rituals of sacrifice or reproducing symbolic representations of the wildness of humanity's primitive instincts.[131] Captive women who face the savagery of the war are not only like the bereaved birds crying for their fates and losses,[132] but also like animals in cages. The similarities with ritual ceremonies at Brauron, where young girls acted as bears for Artemis in the festivals of Arkteia, are profound.[133] The pre-marriage status of these maidens is symbolically reproduced by the Trojan women who face an impending new marriage. Either maidens, or married, they are going to be a part of a maturation process that leads them to a marriage, or a second marriage.

[131] Goff (as cited in Padilla 1999, 109-128).
[132] Polyxena in *Hecuba* (178) and Hecuba in *Trojan Women* (146) mention birds to express vulnerability and motherhood.
[133] On the Arkteia, see Perlman (1989, 111-33).

Another motif that links rites of passage with the Trojan women's journey is that in both cases girls or women were removed or exiled to a place isolated from their own households or communities and were 'subjected to physical orders and trials'.[134] The significant difference between these two parallel situations is that the young girls re-integrated afterwards into the social community of their cities, while the captive women are confronted with mutual separation and enslavement.

Van Gennep suggests that travel itself 'is a passage with dynamics of the type found in other passage rites such as those of initiation'; observing also that travel 'must also be one of the commonest basic structures for narratives'.[135] Travel is not only one aspect of the 'captive's dilemma', [136] and the choice between death and a new perspective of life. In *Hecuba* and *Trojan Women*, the period of waiting undergone by the women is a liminal situation; and the seashore a space of contradictory feelings and realizations: a stage where a symbolic dramatic *agon* takes place between the primitive and civilization. In this remote threshold space between two poles and respective choices, human beings must determine their own lives. If we can identify the seashore as a tragic space, it is because it acquires a temporary character within the frameworks of ancient Greek tragedy as a liminal space of *dilemma*, choice, and transition.

2.4 The nautical imagery in Euripides' *Hecuba* and *Trojan Women*

Euripides uses imagery in his tragedies to create a wider dramatic space where the sea plays a dominant role as an off-stage locality, which is often associated with the

[134] For this aspect of the rites of passage for young girls, see Katz as cited in Padilla 1999, 129-147.
[135] Gennep (as cited in Padilla 1999, 228).
[136] Scodel (1998, 153) points out the choice of the women in *Trojan Women* to 'remain within the past or to try to negotiate a future'.

development of the plot. Seeking to highlight the continued presence of the sea in man's life, he repeatedly makes multiple references to this environment in the narrative.

In the prologue of Poseidon in *Trojan Women*, it could be said that the world under the surface of the sea, the place of Poseidon's departure, may be identified as a parallel theatrical stage on which the Nereids 'twirls their steps so gracefully' (*κάλλιστον ἴχνος ἐξελίσσουσιν ποδός*, *Trojan Women* 3). This indirect metatheatrical function creates a second invisible field of action in which the events that will take place there after the end of the tragedy determine, from the audience's perspective, what happens on stage during the play. The perpetual motion of the sea-deity's Nereids functions as a portent of impending disaster. From the very beginning of the play, this second imaginary chorus is replaced on stage by the presence of the Trojan captive women as living proof of a hard and uncertain reality.

The image of the graceful dancing Nereid in the audience's imagination is counterbalanced by Hecuba's presence on stage. The Trojan queen in her grief expresses her outrage for the ships that caused the destruction of Troy after their arrival. She likens the 'endlessly weep and lament' (*ἐπὶ τοὺς αἰεὶ δακρύων ἐλέγους*, *Trojan Women* 119) to unhappy music for those in misfortune, 'singing their joyless woes' (*ἄτας κελαδεῖν ἀχορεύτους*, *Trojan Women* 121). One nuance of the meaning of the Greek word *keladein* (utter aloud) suggests the sound of flowing water, and the word *achoreutous* may be interpreted as 'not trained in the dance' or 'songs that are not danced'. The sound of the sea thus acquires a plaintive voice which is reflected in Hecuba's mourning. Dancing acquires again its ritual dimension in the lyrical *stasimon* in which the women of the chorus recall the festive atmosphere of the night before the total destruction of their city. The hymns and dances in honour of the goddess Artemis create a poetic world analogous to the motion of Nereids. The dance of the Trojan

women is abruptly stopped by the bloody cries of looting (*φοινία δ' ἀνὰ/ πτόλιν βοὰ κατεῖχε Περ-/γάμων ἕδρας*, *Trojan Women* 561-3). The wrath of the Greek soldiers transforms Troy into a desert landscape in the same way that the gods will alter the tranquil sea to a place of death.

An ironic reflection of the dance of the Nereids is most likely depicted in the scene in which Cassandra invites Hecuba to dance with her the matrimonial hymn. The 'bacchic dance' of Apollo's priestess symbolizes through its restless form the continuous agony of mortals who confront the changes life brings, and which their destiny determines, as well as the fear of imminent death. The invisible dance of Nereids in the sea acquires on stage the visible form of human bodies which experience slavery and suffering. This dance may be identified as a ritual process that symbolizes man's effort to communicate through a natural, mortal body with an unknown metaphysical world.

One of the most significant images directly associated with the sea in ancient Greek thought is the ship. The realistic, symbolic and sometimes allegorical use of the ship in ancient Greek tragedy is closely connected to treatments of the sea as a place, which is directly identified with expansionism, trading, exchanging, and transportation.[137] Multiple metaphors pertaining to the ship may be traced through *Hecuba* and *Trojan Women.* One of the most important connects the ship not to the sea but to the land. Wood from Mount Ida is the primary material used for the ship of Alexander (Paris).[138] The chorus sings of the Trojan prince's journey in this wooden ship, from Troy to Sparta, in order to make Helen his bride, causing fatal disaster:

Ἰδαίαν ὅτε πρῶτον ὕλαν

[137] Lindenlauf (2004, 417).
[138] Collard (1991, 164-5), Harrison (2008, 52), Gregory (1999, 122), Meiggs (1982, 118).

Ἀλέξανδρος εἰλατίναν

ἐτάμεθ', ἅλιον ἐπ' οἶδμα ναυστολήσων

Ἑλένας ἐπὶ λέκτρα.

when first Alexandros

cut the fir tree's wood on Ida

to sail across the surge of the salt sea

to marry Helen

(*Hecuba* 629-34)

Furthermore, the same material, mountain pinewood, is used for the construction of the ship-trap sent by the Argives to the Trojans as a holy gift for the Trojan goddess, the daughter of Zeus:

πᾶσα δὲ γέννα Φρυγῶν

πρὸς πύλας ὡρμάθη,

πεύκᾳ ἐν οὐρεΐᾳ ξεστὸν λόχον Ἀργείων

καὶ Δαρδανίας ἄταν θέᾳ δώσων,

χάριν ἄζυγος ἀμβροτοπώλου:

κλωστοῦ δ' ἀμφιβόλοις λίνοιο ναὸς ὡσεὶ

σκάφος κελαινόν, εἰς ἕδρανα

λάινα δάπεδά τε φόνια πατρί-

δι Παλλάδος θέσαν θεᾶς.

All of the race of the Phrygians

rushed to the gates,

to present to the goddess the polished structure of mountain

pinewood,

the Argives' ambush pregnant with Troy's ruin,

a gift to the maiden with immortal steeds.

flinging round it ropes of spun flax,

they dragged it like a ship's black hull

onto the floor of the stone temple of the goddess Pallas

(*Trojan Women* 531-40)

The grandiose image of the Wooden Horse hides imminent death in its depths. The horse's 'pregnancy' gives birth to destruction,[139] in the same way as the gleaming surface of the sea will be transformed into a dangerous path for the Achaeans. A specific reference to the Trojan Horse is already made in the preface of Poseidon, identifying it as an accomplice which causes death, looting and the destruction of Troy. Epeius, a Phocian from Parnassus,

[139] Horses are also referred to in the second *stasimon* of the chorus in which the story of Dawn and Tithonus is mentioned (*Trojan Women* 840-59).

ἐγκύμον' ἵππον τευχέων ξυναρμόσας,

πύργων ἔπεμψεν ἐντὸς ὀλέθριον βρέτας

fashioned a horse pregnant with arms

and sent its deadly weight inside the towers

(*Trojan Women* 11-12)

The wooden horse, like a black ship (*σκάφος κελαινόν*, *Trojan Women* 546), becomes the retaliation of the Greeks for the shameful act of Paris. The image of the horse is also alluded to through the mythical reference to prehistory mentioned by the chorus in the second *stasimon*. The song refers to the Greek heroes, Telamon and Heracles, and their journey to Troy in order to kill Laomedon and sack Troy.[140] The immortal horses, the prize promised by Laomedon to Heracles for saving his daughter Hesione from the sea monster sent by the god Poseidon after Laomedon had cheated him and Apollo by refusing them a gift he had promised, are the reason for, and the beginning of the first destruction of Troy in the mythic era.

κανόνων δὲ τυκίσματα Φοίβου

... πυρὸς φοίνικι πνοᾷ καθελὼν

Τροίας ἐπόρθησε χθόνα.

δὶς δὲ δυοῖν πιτύλοιν τείχη † περὶ †

Δαρδανίας φοινία κατέλυσεν αἰχμά.

[140] Homer *Il*. 21.450ff, Apollodorus 2.5.9, 3.12.7, Lee (1976, 214).

He destroyed

the walls of stone, Phoebus' fine handiwork, in a red blast

of flame

and sacked the city of Troy.

Twice, yes in two onslaughts the bloody spear-point

Wrought destruction on the Trojans around their walls

(*Trojan Women* 814-819)

Wood, as the construction material of the ship, becomes a way and means of domination, of man's ingenuity in his battle against nature, and consequently against himself. However nature, as we observe in the prologue of the *Trojan Women*, has the power, through divine will, to destroy the wooden ships. Consequently, material constructions and human bodies become part of the cycle of nature. The remarkable metaphor linking the body with ships is also used in a more theatrical way by Polymestor. During his madness, he imagines his 'flax-woven robes as a ship furls its sails with its sea-going rigging' (*ναῦς ὅπως ποντίοις πείσμασιν, λινόκροκον φᾶρος στέλλων*, *Hecuba* 1080-1).

We mentioned earlier the dynamic function of the dead body on the stage. It is worth pointing out the way in which a living human body is presented through the creative imagination of Euripides as a boat, and how the sea is linked with the uncertain fate of man and the misfortunes of his life. Hecuba plays a prominent role in *Hecuba* and *Trojan Women*. In *Hecuba* the old body of the Trojan queen suffers the pain (*ἄλγος*) in the presence of her son's dead body, which is brought by a servant from the coast.

The image of Polydorus body wandering into the sea in *Hecuba* (*πελάγιος κλύδων, Hecuba* 701) finds its parallel in *Trojan Women,* in which Hecuba describes herself as (*δύστηνων κλύδων, Trojan Women* 718). The exposed human body wandering into the waves of the sea is connected, in many cases in *Trojan Women*, with the image of the human body as a boat.

In *Trojan Women,* Hecuba in her monody (98-153) uses remarkable nautical metaphors. The sea is compared to life, and Hecuba desires the best conditions in order to cross the narrow passage of her own fate (*κατά πορθμόν, Trojan Women* 102). Hecuba has to endure the veering wheel of fortune (*μεταβαλλομένου δαίμονος ἀνέχου, Trojan Women* 101), and like a sailor upon the sea, she must steer her life with the direction of the waves and winds, not against them. (*μηδὲ προσίστω πρῷραν βιότου /πρὸς κῦμα πλέουσα τύχαισιν, Trojan Women* 103-4). Her body is the vessel of her life which is now useless in confronting its destiny. Hecuba's depiction implies that she herself is a ship floundering in the storm or as a vulnerable mortal body (*ὦ πολὺς ὄγκος συστελλόμενος, Trojan Women* 108) twisting and turning from one side to another in a boat at the mercy of the sea (*καὶ διαδοῦναι νῶτον ἄκανθάν τ'/ εἰς ἀμφοτέρους τοίχους*, *Trojan Women* 117-8). The human body, exposed and suffering, is the focal point of man's speculations concerning life and death, choice and fate, violence and abandonment.

Another striking metaphor connected to the human body is the function of the hands. In Euripides' *Hecuba*, hands, like the tentacles of octopus, acquire a clinging power able not only to bind and disarm their pray but also to suffocate it.[141] As Polymestor states in his speech, some of the Trojan women grabbed Polymestor's hands

[141] I adopt Collard's (1991, 193) conjecture of *πολυπόδων* (octopuses) as the possible word of the Greek text.

and ‘limbs and clung on to them like octopuses’ (*πολυπόδων δίκην/ ξυναρπάσασαι τὰς ἐμὰς εἶχον χέρας/ καὶ κῶλα, Hecuba* 1162-4). Furthermore, the image of women dangling the children of Polymestor in their hands and passing them from one to the other in order to remove them from their father creates dramatic irony (*ὅσαι δὲ τοκάδες ἦσαν, ἐκπαγλούμεναι/ τέκν’ ἐν χεροῖν ἔπαλλον, ὡς πρόσω πατρὸς/ γένοιντο, διαδοχαῖς ἀμείβουσαι χερῶν, Hecuba* 1157-9). The hands become not a symbolic image of maternal protection, but lethal weapons that murder innocent children. In the tents of the Trojan women, a murder, like a secret ritual of death, takes place.

This group of women acquires, together with Hecuba, a communal identity and is temporarily transformed into a mythical creature, in order to take revenge for an unjust murder through committing an analogous one. The interpretation of women’s hands as an octopus not only illustrates the primitive instincts of human behaviour but could also be understood as nature's revenge against human's atrocities. The exposed body in the sea is a source of its pollution, and the octopuses as mythical creatures in the depths of the sea defend their habitat against the cause of such an abusive act. The women are therefore converted into creatures of nature, and the violent act is legitimized within the rules of nature.

Another nautical metaphor that refers to the hands, connecting them with the quick motion of oar-strokes, may be identified in *Trojan Women*. The chorus sings in their utmost despair:

ἄρασσ’ ἄρασσε κρᾶτα

πιτύλους διδοῦσα χειρός

Strike, strike your head

with your hands beating their oar-strokes

(*Trojan Women 1245-6*)

Talthybius, giving the last orders for the destruction of Troy, creates a metaphor utilizing the image of fire. The Greek captains hold torches in their hands, and Talthybius urges them not to let the flame lie idle in their hands but to set it to work, so that they may raze Illium to the ground (*Trojan Women* 1260-1263). The image of the flames that illustrate the victory of the Greeks will also symbolize the cause of their future sufferings.

Between the period of the final fall of Troy and the impending departure of both the victorious and defeated for Greece, the sea is portrayed as a dramatic landscape, which is directly connected with mortal man's past and future life. Euripides uses the seascape as a familiar space in order to vividly convey the invisible world of the myth, through the power of speech, to his audience, composing images with multiple interpretations and symbols. The nautical imagery, hence, functions as a complementary dramatic element for the representation of space in the audience's imagination.

2.5 Cynossema: A warning landmark for sailors

In *Hecuba* and *Trojan Women*, Euripides dramatizes the consequences of the war on human destiny. It is certainly the case that the female population of Troy, the surviving remnants of the once mighty city, endures the most violent repercussions of the war. Nevertheless, many passages in the two tragedies underline, directly or indirectly, the constant threats and jeopardies that the Greek army will confront during the return

voyage. Euripides reminds his audience, through his mythical stories, that human affairs and rivalries are not only determined by force of arms but are also driven by metaphysical intervention and natural justice.

In *Hecuba* the human-environmental relations are emphasized not from the perspective of human impact on environment but significantly through the way the nature and weather conditions affect the development of the plot. We have examined above the role of the sea and the seashore as a prominent dramatic environment. In the final part of this chapter we will examine Hecuba's ambivalent death in the sea, her dramatically necessary transformation into a dog, and how this metaphysical figure, between human and beast, acquires a space of memory in an isolated, eponymous watery grave.

In the final scene of *Hecuba*, Agamemnon announces the desired departure for the Greek army. Favourable winds are the signal for Greek's departure (*καὶ γὰρ πνοὰς πρὸς οἶκον ἤδη τάσδε πομπίμους ὁρῶ, Hecuba* 1289-90) and the captive women's unavoidable journey to a foreign land where they taste 'the grim labours of slavery' (*τῶν δεσποσύνων πειρασόμεναι μόχθων, Hecuba* 1294-5). His optimistic wishes for a safe homecoming (*εὖ δ' ἐς πάτραν πλεύσαιμεν, εὖ δὲ τἀν δόμοις, Hecuba* 1291), in contrast to Polymestor's bleak prophecy about Agamemnon's future, emphasize the play's dramatic irony. The breeze and the ocean provide good sailing homeward for the Greek general, but a bloodbath awaits him in Argos (*κτεῖν', ὡς ἐν Ἄργει φόνια λουτρά σ' ἀμμένει, Hecuba* 1281).

Although Polymestor's predictions about Hecuba and Agamemnon refer to a period of time after the end of the tragedy, the prophetic words of Polydorus' ghost are fulfilled, via a sequence of events, during the play. The old Trojan queen saw 'the two

corpses of two of her children' (*δυοῖν δὲ παίδοιν δύο νεκρὼ κατόψεται μήτηρ, Hecuba* 45) on this single day of her life (*τῷδ' ἐμὴν ἐν ἥματι, Hecuba* 44). The increasing pain and grief of Hecuba, motivates her to organize her plan regarding Polymestor's punishment. She demands justice. Although she is utterly alone, weak, and enslaved, her wish is almost satisfied. Her master Agamemnon, the 'supreme light of the Greeks' (*ὦ μέγιστον Ἕλλησιν φάος, Hecuba* 841), is finally persuaded and he gives her his 'avenging hand' (*παράσχες χεῖρα τῇ πρεσβύτιδι Τιμωρόν, Hecuba* 842), doing nothing (*μένειν ἀνάγκη πλοῦν ὁρῶντ' ἐς ἥσυχον, Hecuba* 901) as the Trojan women take revenge on the killer of Polydorus.

Expressing her utmost desire to punish the man who killed her son, Hecuba pleads to the gods and the strong principles of law that rule them (*ἀλλ' οἱ θεοὶ σθένουσι χὠ κείνων κρατῶν Νόμος, Hecuba 799*). Hecuba, realizing the limitations of human ability, wishes to be transformed into a body which could have the power to persuade the Greek general.

εἴ μοι γένοιτο φθόγγος ἐν βραχίοσι

καὶ χερσὶ καὶ κόμαισι καὶ ποδῶν βάσει

ἢ Δαιδάλου τέχναισιν ἢ θεῶν τινος,

ὡς πάνθ' ὁμαρτῇ σῶν ἔχοιντο γουνάτων

κλαίοντ', ἐπισκήπτοντα παντοίους λόγους.

I wish I had a voice in my arms

and hands and hair, and in the feet on which I walk,

whether by the skills of Daedalus or those of the gods,

so that they could all weep together and clasp your knees,

urging arguments of every kind.

(*Hecuba* 836-40)

Mossman highlights the probability that Hecuba might undergo a kind of 'liberation of energy' and that it is not her will to be transformed into a strange beast.[142] Nevertheless, the metaphysical creature of her fantasy acquires, at the end of the play, more distinct characteristics. It is not only her temporary transformation into an animalian state but also her soul's liberation from an enslaved mortal body, perhaps even her choice of permanent relief from life's sufferings.[143] The Thracian prophet Dionysus told Polymestor about Hecuba's destiny. The Trojan queen will not arrive in Greece but, during the sea voyage, she 'will climb up the ship's mast' (*αὐτὴ πρὸς ἱστὸν ναὸς ἀμβήσῃ ποδί, Hecuba 1263*) willingly, and fall into the sea. In the last moments of her life she will be turned into a dog with the fire-red eyes (*κύων γενήσῃ πύρσ' ἔχουσα δέργματα, Hecuba 1265*). Burnett interprets this poetic image as a suicide suggesting that 'the moment of transformation will come either during her fall or in the waves as she dies'[144]

The sea again plays a prominent role in her destiny. The sea not only temporarily hosts the corpse of her son, but also is the place where her life ends before her name is identified with the famous landmark of Cynossema.[145] As a mortal in a

[142] Mossman (1995, 129).
[143] For Hecuba's transformation see Burnett (1994, 152-62), Burnett (1998, 173-6), Daitz (1971, 222) Gellie (1980, 40), Gregory (1997, 89), Kovacks (1987, 108-9), Mossman (1995, 197-8), Rehm (2002, 181), Zeitlin (1991, 54).
[144] Burnett (1994, 152).
[145] Vernant (1991, 189) supports that '*sema, mnema,* and *stele*...convey the paradoxical inscription of absence in presence'.

dilemma, Hecuba chooses to fall from the masthead of the ship, and the sea becomes the place that hosts her dead body. Having been transformed into a monstrous creature, she cannot be incorporated into a civilized world. She becomes part of nature and, therefore, her name is connected with an isolated promontory outside of the organized structure of the *polis*. It should also be mentioned that, as the ship could be characterized as a striking metaphor for the *polis* in Greek tragedy, from the perspective of the audience, Hecuba refuses to be a part of this society which reflects the constitution of the democratic city within the sea. Her death and, simultaneously, her return to a primitive status could be identified as a revolutionary action that may recall the historical background of the play and chiefly the decision of many allied islands and cities to secede from the Athenian alliance.[146] Revolt, in many cases, arouses extreme retaliation against such undesirable actions and thus the defeated population of these cities confronts the atrocities of Athenian imperialism.[147] Therefore, Hecuba's choice to commit suicide could have a political connotation. The barbaric slave woman denies a life in slavery. But she is unable to determine her own destiny. Supernatural forces transform Hecuba into a canine state. Her body is taken into the sea and the emblematic landmark of Cynossema becomes her grave, and a landmark for sailors.

Cynossema was a well-known place for the Athenians who will have known it from being sailors and sailing past it.[148] Its location, on the southern side of the Thracian Chersonese, signified a dangerous passage past a rough and narrow promontory where powerful currents increased the danger of shipwreck.[149] This remote territory in a barbaric land is not a place of return or exile. It is only a natural but dangerous

[146] For Athenian policy toward cities that revolt against Athens see Gregory (1999, xiv ff).
[147] Thucydides describes the practices and measures that was taken by Athenian generals against population of Mytilene (3.36-49), Thyrea (4.56.2-57) and Scione (4.122.6, 5.32.1).
[148] Burnett (1994, 159).
[149] Burnett (1998, 175).

geographical region, which is transmuted into a signal of salvation. Euripides chose this place as Hecuba's tomb, even though he creates, via the women's speculations about possible destinations in Greece, a geographical map where Greek cities play a significant role as places of enslavement. But mortals' destiny is mainly determined in myths of tragedy by the decision of the gods. It is highly significant that the gods do not appear in *Hecuba,* yet it is the gods who possibly cause the appropriate weather conditions to satisfy their desires. Furthermore, it is the invisible Thracian Dionysus, in Polymestor's speech, who prophesies the future of Hecuba.[150]

In *Hecuba*, Dionysus predicts, via Polymestor's vengeful speech, the transformation of the mortal Trojan queen into a dog, liberating her through her death and metamorphosis, from her state of enslavement. The loss of her previous identity, her violent behaviour, as a maenad, against Polymestor and his sons, her climbing on the head mast of the ship, and her animal characteristics before she is lost into the waves, recall many aspects of the ritual of Dionysus. An underlying connection could be traced between Hecuba's transformation and Dionysos' ability to inspire among humans the desire for disguise. In *Bacchae,* the outsider god Dionysus initiates and establishes his new mysteries in the land of Greece. He goads the women out of their houses and inspires them to behave as maenads expressing their primitive characteristics like animals. The wandering sacred band of the god's escorts praise the joy of the new religion, revealing the dominance of untamed nature over the controlled world of the city.[151]

Dionysus associates Hecuba's grave with a geographical promontory functioning as a landmark for sailors. In this tragedy, Cynossema connects the mythical

[150] Schlesier (as cited in Zeitlin, 1991, 59) suggests the parallels between Polydorus and child Dionysus.
[151] Hall (2010, 294).

with historical space, and the tragedy once more manages to combine the contradictory features of life and death. The place that marks Hecuba's death becomes a space of memory and a warning sign of salvation for wandering voyagers.[152] Cynossema depicts a transitional space and, like other landscapes which are surrounded by the sea, is associated in Greek thought and literature with isolation, unpredictable weather conditions, and favourable or unfavourable reception of the passing travellers by its inhabitants. As an uninhabitable promontory, Cynossema is identified as a rough narrow passage. Although the danger could be easily recognized by sailors in daylight, it is possible that fire signals in specific points of the land were necessary in order to be read from the sea in the dark of night.[153] Fire torches are prominent posts that not only announce victories or defeats, but function as significant nautical signs which warn for imminent dangers during a sea voyage.

Hecuba's tomb transforms, therefore, the nautical threat into a saving landmark day and night. It could therefore be argued that the gleam of Hecuba's fire red eyes indicates the glow of flames which assist sailors when they face navigational difficulties. The beacons create gates of safe passage in the sea, and protect the sailors in a similar way to a dog that guards the gate of a house. This possibly explains the plausible link between Hecuba and Hecate.[154] As Burnett clearly states referring to Hecate: she was 'like a dog, a guardian and watcher at gates; she was Phylax and Prothyraia'.[155] The last lines of the play which refer to Hecuba as a protector of sailors, possibly reflect her maternal anxiety and agony about her son. The exposed body of Polydorus in the sea could function as a potential fear for everyone confronting the

[152] Pucci (1977, 183).
[153] Burnett (1994, 159).
[154] For the association between Hecate and the dog in cult, see Burnett (1994, 155-162), Mossman (1995, 197-8), Scholz (1937, 40ff).
[155] Burnett (1994, 155).

dangers of a voyage through watery passages. Hecuba, on the verge of her own destiny (*moira*), becomes the last guardian of devastated Troy. She struggles for the imposition of law (*nomos*), asks for justice, and claims the right for punishment. Using persuasion (*peitho*), Hecuba achieves her goal, not only to ensure Agamemnon's neutrality when she formulates her murderous plan, but also to reveal Polymestor's impiety, disloyalty, and lawlessness.

Hecuba, as a gatekeeper between life and death, sea and land, light and dark, becomes, through Polymestor's prophecy, part of a marginal but emblematic space. Euripides probably invents this story in order to explain the origin of the name, connecting Hecuba's transformation with Cynossema.[156] Furthermore, the geographical characteristics of this place near the sea form an appropriate dramatic environment as a dynamic background which expresses Hecuba's changeable destiny. Her memorial in a distant barbarian region, but not far from the place where her two children and her bitter enemies are buried, underscores multiple interpretations about the war and its consequences. Dead mortals in Greek tragedy, having died on their own or not, buried or unburied, lamented or unlamented, reveal a great concern about death and ontological issues, not only in ancient Greek dramaturgy but in Greek life as a whole. Cynossema portrays not a burial place for those who lost their lives in the battlefield, but a grave memorial, which evokes, more generally, the losses of the war. Furthermore, Cynossema, as a dangerous sea-passage, functions, in the audience's imagination, as a warning sign against imperialistic strategies and arrogant behaviour. The powerful sea infuses the world of the play, recalling again, both the dynamics and the boundaries of human nature.

[156] Harrison (2008, 96).

Chapter 3

Sea, Sanctuary, and Salvation

3.1 Aeschylus' *Suppliants*

3.1.1 Introduction

Mortal life is a continuous adventure within the limited frameworks of space and time. The tragic irony of human nature is that, although human beings struggle to overcome or not succumb to these metaphysically determined 'walls' of mortality, the events of birth and death remind them of the finitude of being. Vulnerable and exposed in his/her physical and biological permeability, a human being is a perpetual suppliant of asylum, seeking to temporarily ensure the fulfilment of a desire to enjoy an as harmonious and painless reality as possible. In this chapter I ask how the sea is connected with the motif of asylum-seeking in Aeschylus' *Suppliants*.

Aeschylus' *Suppliants* is a story of supplication, and also a 'genealogical' drama[157] with multiple sociological, political and religious aspects. The vulnerable group of fifty Danaids, self-exiled from Egypt and accompanied by their father Danaus, disembark on the shore of Lerna, near Argos in the Peloponnese. They appeal to the gods and make a petition to the King of Argos, Pelasgus, to protect them and grant their plea for asylum. The Danaids support their argument by invoking the mythical figure of their ancestress Io, as profound evidence of their connection to Argos. Their journey is a flight to salvation. Their cousins, the fifty sons of Danaus' brother Aegyptus, persecute the nubile girls in order to seize and subdue them with the yoke of marriage. Pelasgus'

[157] Fowler (1967, 21).

decision is deliberated within a turbulent dramatic atmosphere. Pelasgus faces the manipulative threats of the Danaids and the imminent arrival of the Aegyptians. The crisis is dissolved by the communal resolution of the *polis*, an action that represents the democratic and rhetorical *ethos* of Pelasgus' authority. The maidens are incorporated within the city and their licentious suitors leave, warning the Argives of an upcoming invasion in revenge.

The myth of Danaus and his daughters was treated by many ancient authors[158] and has been subject to thorough scholarly research during the last few decades. A series of significant publications provide scholastic discussion and detailed commentaries of the text.[159] Furthermore, subtle interpretations focus on the importance of supplication,[160] the institution of marriage,[161] the interplay between politics and eros,[162] and the bipolar patterns and images concerning issues of genre, ethnicity and mortality in the ancient world.

Yet far less attention has been paid to the sea as a significant domain, which specifies the borders and links to the distanced lands. The working hypothesis in my study is, instead, that the aquatic imagery plays a prominent role in Aeschylus' *Suppliants*. The sea can be identified as a liminal territory and the seashore as a precarious space where immigrants are exposed to a fragile procedure that could lead them either to a state of exclusion or incorporation.

The first part of this subchapter begins with the function of the sea as a geographical border between two different worlds and considers this nautical passage as

[158] Hesiod (frs 127-9 M-W), Phrynichus (TrGF 3 F1-1a; 4), Pindar (P.9 112-117), Herodotus (2.171). Information also included in scholia made by Pseudo-Apollodorus, Hyginus and Pausanias.
[159] Bowen (2013), Sommerstein (2008, 3 vols), Sandin (2005), Johansen and Whittle (1980, 3vols), Tucker (1889).
[160] Bakewell (1997), Gould (1973), Naiden (2006), Turner (2001).
[161] Des Bouvrie (1990), Seaford (1987).
[162] Zeitlin (1992).

an avenue to exile, encompassing various possibilities and challenges. The significance of the image of the gods' statues, as a focal point in the *Suppliants'* setting, has been suggested by several scholars, but no one has yet undertaken to investigate its connection with the seashore and the role of the silent presence of divinity in relation to the sea in the play. The second part examines this visual representation of the gods in light of such a primary examination. The final part of this subchapter discusses the portrayal of the Danaids as water nymphs of Argos, in their dynamic transformation from helpless maidens to skilful manipulators, and how the images of streams, rivers and lustral waters connect the dark-skinned immigrant girls with fertility, virginity and death.

3.1.2 Crossing the boundaries – The sea as an avenue to exile

Evidently Aeschylus' *Suppliants* is a tragedy of which the main theme examines the political aspects of supplication, reflecting the Athenian ideology and practice with regard to the status of *metoikia.*[163] We should bear in mind that the spectators of the Great Dionysia festival were not only indigenous Athenian citizens but also *metics* and probably individuals with a barbarian upbringing, slaves or ex-slaves.[164] The text of the play repeatedly undermines proficient motifs and bipolar patterns revealing the dual role of a mortal's identity. In their lives, humans, Greek or barbarians, men or women, insiders or outsiders, preserve the status of the stranger.[165]

[163] For the definition of *metoikia* and the actual laws of *metic* status see Whitehead's book *The ideology of the Athenian metic* (1977).
[164] For the "barbarian spectator" see Hall (2006, 196-206).
[165] As Eumaeus responds to Odysseus 'For from Zeus are all strangers and beggars' (*πρὸς γὰρ Διός εἰσιν ἅπαντες ξεῖνοί τε πτωχοί τε,* Homer *Od*. 14.57-8). Also see Homer *Od*. 6.207-8.

The tragic stage of ancient Greek theatre encompasses and unites the mythic world of an ambiguous past with the temporary world of history. Theatre, through a play of transformation, becomes the apparent portrait of a dramatic milieu, which evokes the thoughts and emotions of the audience. Although scenic space determines the frames of the visible setting of each tragedy,[166] authors had the opportunity to create an imaginary 'invisible' universe beyond the visually discernible fictive space, where mortals, gods and heroes confront their wanderings, challenges and explorations.

Geographical borders, often not literally present, determine the spatial dualism of the ancient Greek world. The magnetic polarity of the *oikos* and the *polis* stems in part from the necessity of a society to identify itself, through the image of the strange, foreign and incomprehensible 'other'. In Aeschylus' *Suppliants*, the vast waterway between 'the fine-sanded foremouths of the Nile' (*προστομίων λεπτοψαμάθων Νείλου, Suppliants* 3-4) and the 'muddy soil' of Argos (*χέρσῳ τῇ δ' ἐν ἀσώδει, Suppliants* 31), provides a web of images that strongly display the juxtaposition of the Egyptians and the Danaids.[167]

The journey from the African 'land of Zeus' (*Δίαν χθόνα, Suppliants* 4-5) to Lerna is an adventure in search of safety, refuge or better life conditions.[168] The exodus of the Danaids from Egypt is enforced by their cousins who demand that the young maidens become their wives. Nevertheless, it is a flight on the basis of the Danaids' own decision (*αὐτογενῆ, Suppliants* 8), rather than an exile 'decided by the citizens' vote' (*ψήφῳ πόλεως γνωσθεῖσαν*, *Suppliants* 6). More specifically it is a revolt against marriage and the first act in pursuit of independence.

[166] Rehm (2002, 20-24) distinguish the space into six spatial categories. However, Taplin (1988, 72) and Wiles (1997, 16) do not discern useful distinctions between theatrical and scenic space.
[167] On Egypt in Greek thought and fantasy see Vasunia (2001).
[168] Strabo in his *Geography* testifies that the Lernaean waters were considered healing (8.6.8). The region of Lerna is also connected with the myth of Hydra, a female water monster who lives in Lake Lerna and guards one of the gates to the Underworld.

Avoiding being part of Egypt's social codes and controversial moral laws, as revealed by Egyptians' abhorrent behaviour, the Danaids anticipate being incorporated into a new land with different moral and political principles as yet unknown to them. For this 'colourfully and orientally attired' band of reluctant brides,[169] who left their birthplace under their father's Danaus leadership and guidance, the voyage 'over the waves of the sea' (*διὰ κῦμ' ἅλιον, Suppliants* 13) becomes the most glorious (*κύδιστ'*, *Suppliants* 12) passage to salvation.

Landing at Argos and overcoming the dangers of the sea, the Danaids appeal to the gods. Their peaceful sea crossing could be an encouraging sign of divine support. The wooden ship brought them 'unharmed by the tempest, helped by the blowing of the wings' (*ἀχείματόν μ' ἔπεμπε σὺν πνοαῖς, Suppliants* 136-7). Their presence is the proof of this achievement. 'Wherever death is absent' (*ὁπόθι θάνατος ἀπῇ, Suppliants* 124), mortals continue the journey of life and undergo undetermined sufferings. At the time of the Danaids' auspicious arrival, Aeschylus uses the striking metaphor of life as a tempest, to describe the fear of mortals about the unpredictable culmination of the voyage. The helpless suppliants express their despair asking 'whither will this wave bear me?' (*ποῖ τόδε κῦμ' ἀπάξει, Suppliants* 127). The gods remain silent. The waves of life lead to an unavoidable destination where death is ever-present.

The image of ships and sailors struggling for their salvation is outstanding in poetic narrations of ancient Greek tragedy. Mariners suffer agonies and face changeable and unpredictable weather conditions, which often mirror the doubts and dilemmas before making irreparable decisions. Pelasgus, the King of Argos, should adopt, like an able mariner, such 'navigational' practices and strategies that assist him to overcome the 'multitude of ills' which attack him like a torrent (*κακῶν δὲ πλῆθος ποταμὸς ὡς*

[169] McCall (1976, 128).

ἐπέρχεται, Suppliants 469); and to survive in the 'unfathomable sea of disaster' (*ἄτης δ' ἄβυσσον πέλαγος, Suppliants* 470). Describing the geographical realm under his rule, Pelasgus defines the vast and remote borders in a telling manner. The fluid sea cuts off his realm (*συντέμνει δ' ὅρος ὑγρᾶς θαλάσσης*, *Suppliants* 258-259) and creates a coastal zone of gulfs, bays and harbours. Pelasgus' freedom of movement is restricted. His decision, like a ship wandering in difficult sailing conditions, finds its harbour (*δεῦρο δ' ἐξοκέλλεται, Suppliants* 438). But his 'well pegged vessel, drawn tight by windlasses' (*γεγόμφωται σκάφος στρέβλαισι ναυτικαῖσιν ὡς προσηγμένον, Suppliants* 440-441) docks at a perilous destination like the 'harbourless coast' (*ἀλίμενον χθόνα, Suppliants* 768) of Lerna, which is exposed to the open sea, and it could be said to evoke misfortunes and warfare.[170]

Between the Danaids' manipulative threats and the Egyptians' bloody invasion, 'nowhere is there a harbour against distress' (*κοὐδαμοῦ λιμὴν κακῶν, Suppliants* 471) for Pelasgus. The yoke of necessity, a central motif in Aeschylean dramaturgy, forces the characters to acknowledge their own priorities and to structure a moral value system in front of dilemmatic situations.[171] Both the Danaids and Pelasgus undergo an inevitable yoking. The king is forced to decide between pollution and war whereas the maidens are determined to succeed in bringing harm upon themselves, the Argives and the gods. The belts of the Danaids are going to be used symbolically as yokes, and literally as murder weapons, that bind them forever with death. The symbolic peaceful and protected space is only a temporary illusion. Man is a mariner and for the tragic characters 'nowhere is there an outcome without grief' (*ἄνευ δὲ λύπης οὐδαμοῦ καταστροφή, Suppliants* 442).

[170] For the role of the physical environment in ancient Greek seafaring, see Morton (2001).
[171] Cowley (2001, 2).

The symbolic role of the harbours in the *Suppliants* is also extended in order to connote the sea as a well-defined border between different communities. This natural demarcation provides insight into many other boundary markers, which concern citizenship, nationhood and belonging. Although the Danaids present trustworthy evidence of their origins as descendants of Io, their physical appearance creates a remarkable juxtaposition,[172] which evokes an image of strangeness, foreignness and ethnic 'otherness' in the audiences' perspective.[173] Despite the fact that dress in Greek ancient drama is obviously 'the safest sign of ethnicity', both the Danaids and Pelasgus, through their speeches, describe many times in the play the young maidens' appearance as a distinctive feature of their origin.[174] The 'un-Hellenic attire' of the Danaids' presence (*ἀνελληνόστολον, Suppliants* 234), although it initially promotes a colourful and oriented image of the other, very soon reveals a hazardous threat for the prosperity of the *polis*.[175]

There are many brilliant existing interpretations and theories that discuss thoroughly the evident foreignness of the Danaids, concerning their language and exotic appearance. Johansen and Whittle provide a challenging interpretation emphasizing the connection between the darkness of the Danaids' complexion and that of Hades.[176] This may justify the suggestion that identifies the young maidens as brides of death through their threat of suicide and their murderous act of killing their husbands in the progression of the trilogy.[177]

[172] Mitchell (2006, 206).
[173] For the representation of foreigners and their identification through their cultural and personal characteristics in Aeschylus see Bacon (1961, 15-63).
[174] Sandin (2005, 146-57). Also Hall (1989, 136-43).
[175] Bakewell (1997, 217). For the theatrical semiotics of costume as 'an essential part in the creation of the meaning', with detailed descriptions, of characters' clothing see Wyles (2011).
[176] Johansen and Whittle (1980, 127).
[177] Bowen (2013, 31) supports that the murders will take place between *Aegyptii* and *Danaides*.

The 'black skin' (*μελανθὲς, Suppliants* 154), which is attributed to the 'burning heat of the sun' (*ἡλιόκτυπον, Suppliants* 155) in oriental regions,[178] is another bipolar motif of light and darkness. The nubile girls' procession, carrying boughs decked with white wool as a token of supplication, is an image standing in contrast to this darkness, which probably attempts to explore the right of taking up a new nationality as a private decision and not as a predefined status. Their final part-incorporation in the political and social life of Argos, although it is a risk for the Argives,[179] could be another piece of supporting evidence for the divine's dynamic presence and superiority over the destiny of the mortals. The community, in this sense, adopts a resolution that prevents its land from commiting the impending sacrilege.

Pelasgus' clear-sighted eye distinguishes, in the dark blue waters, what the chorus of the Danaids renders clear for him to see (*ὠμμάτωσα γὰρ σαφέστερον, Suppliants* 467). Like a diver he could discern with his sober eye the most secure solution for his *polis* and the salvation of its citizens:

> *δεῖ τοι βαθείας φροντίδος σωτηρίου,*
>
> *δίκην κολυμβητῆρος, ἐς βυθὸν μολεῖν*
>
> *δεδορκὸς ὄμμα, μηδ' ἄγαν ὠνωμένον,*
>
> *ὅπως ἄνατα ταῦτα πρῶτα μὲν πόλει,*
>
> *αὐτοῖσί θ' ἡμῖν ἐκτελευτήσει καλῶς*
>
> There is need for deep thought to save us, I tell you, a need to go down to the bottom like a diver, as a penetrative and not too much

[178] Herodotus 2.22.3.
[179] Bakewell (1997, 211).

intoxicated eye, so that this problem, for the city and for me myself, first comes to a good end without disaster.

(*Suppliants* 407-411)

He defends the right to counsel so as to act responsibly in order to bring salvation (*μῶν οὐ δοκεῖ δεῖν φροντίδος σωτηρίου, Suppliants* 417). He asks the Danaids to respond to his question. However this may be seen as a rhetorical question. There is a suggestion that if man is prudent and acts responsibly, he will satisfy the gods in order to be able to attain his salvation. However, in the religious *cosmos* of Aeschylean dramaturgy, the gods determine the life of humans and natural phenomena become divine means for their will.

In the last lines of the tragedy, the Danaids express, through an ambiguous but logical question as to their future, their fear of seeing the bottomless mind of Zeus (*τί δὲ μέλλω φρένα Δίαν/ καθορᾶν, ὄψιν ἄβυσσον, Suppliants* 1057-8). They voice the same fear in the *parodos* when they are exposed to a more unprotected emotional state. 'The paths of Zeus' mind stretched out shaggy and shaded, not easy to trace and unperceivable to the sight' (*δαυλοὶ γὰρ πραπίδων/ δάσκιοί τε τείνουσιν πόροι/ κατιδεῖν ἄφραστοι, Suppliants* 93-5). The eyes of the mortals, before the darkness of divine chaos, are unable to find the light of truth. Eyes are the mirrors of the soul, which is always exiled and errant travelling in-between life and death.

The routes of exile, as described through the female journeys of Danaids, their ancestor Io, and the mythical lamenting figure of the nightingale, not only express an enforced, voluntary or spontaneous desire for escape, but also reveal their uncompromised beliefs and principles. They partly succeed in their aim via a transformation, incorporation or acquisition of freedom. In addition, their independent

attitude could identify them as border-crossers. Despising social, religious, and cultural frameworks, these women stand on the threshold of a world where masculine and divine figures impose to their vulnerable 'victims' possible perspectives between salvation, endless suffering and death. They resist any compromise able to contaminate its ethical values and they long for their final 'victory'; their release from sufferings or a vengeful punishment for their enemies.

In the case of the Danaids, as mentioned earlier, their long-distance voyage follows an open-sailing route between two specific coastal territories. This kind of sailing, with the land out of sight, may simplify the needs of navigation but, on the contrary, it makes Danaus and his daughters more likely to be caught in bad weather conditions.[180] Danaus' experience is mentioned,[181] and it stands as a vitally important factor for their seafaring given his ability to predict all the factors affecting the voyage and to support psychologically his crew under any sailing condition. Danaus is the paternal navigator, the leader, and the chief counsellor of the flight of the Danaids (*πατὴρ καὶ βούλαρχος/ καὶ στασίαρχος, Suppliants* 10-11). He also could be identified as the commander of the ship and by extension of the *polis*. Taking into concern the common motif of the state as a ship, it is permissible to suggest the presence of the intelligent Danaus as the captain of this travelling *polis*. His daughters often, and not accidentally, are identified as a *στόλος* in the play. This nautical term can refer to both an expedition by sea as well as a fleet. Escaping from a structured barbaric society, the Danaids reject their status as a part of *oikos* and vindicate the rights and model of living as members of a more democratic and liberal *polis.* During their voyage they are not integrated into any society. Simultaneously their vulnerable, helpless and pursued state

[180] Braudel (2002, 106).
[181] As Zeitlin (1996, 143) points out 'above all Danaus is an expert in navigation and seamanship; the trusty *naukleros* of his ship'.

is also a sign of independence in the midst of a world of predatory suitors and violent barbarity. The image of these travelling women corresponds very closely with their identification as '*metics'*. Women are always '*metics*' in ancient Greece in that they move from natal to marital home while men stay in their natal home.

Considering Shaw's analysis,[182] which explores a woman's transition from the private world of the *oikos* to the external sphere of the *polis,* we could go a step further by emphasizing the identity of a 'female intruder' as one that re-establishes the boundaries, not only between the *oikos* and the *polis* but also between the self and the 'other', between *autochthones* and *metics*, and between men and women. In Aeschylus' *Suppliants* the Danaids are neither the enslaved group of the barbarians, nor a company of travelers with divine predestinations. The Danaids abandon, neglect, and undervalue their impending and violent union of marriage with their cousins. They break the traditional model that their destiny imposes on them, by threatening and manipulating divine powers and political authorities.

Through exaggerating the limits of mortals, they impose their own values and desires. Creating and directing a meta-theatrical dramatic setting of sea persecution and horrifying suicides, the Danaids organize and perform actions in order to achieve their goal; to traverse the unprotected and vulnerable state in order to become secure in a hospitable and protected environment. The image of the ship is their temporary *oikos,* outside of the sphere of the *polis* and masculine social domination. But in the ancient world, stories of persecution and every travelling adventure, in most of the cases, end with an arrival at a liminal space. In Aeschylus' *Suppliants* the shore becomes the land where the Danaids face the dilemma of being a part of a civilized world or to preserve

[182] Shaw (1975, 255-60).

their primitivism as nymphs of nature. Nevertheless, they set their own path of living by maintaining their arguments for their freedom within the *polis*.

The sea in Aeschylus' *Suppliants* is portrayed as a field of persecution but simultaneously it is the *ἁλίρρυτον ἄλσος* ('salt-flowing levels', *Suppliants* 868), which links together two other references to the word *ἄλσος* during the play. The *βέβηλον ἄλσος* ('public precinct', *Suppliants* 509) of the dry Argos, as a place of salvation, depicting their reluctance to be married, and the *πάμβοτον ἄλσος* ('plain where all are fed', *Suppliants* 558) the territory of the Nile's and Io's fertility, as the abandoned land of their past.

The thickets of Zeus and the aquatic grove illustrate, in the most poetic and specific image, the dramatic space of hunting and persecution among animals, mortals and gods. In this symbolic milieu, the ships are made of trees, which are cut into planks. The wooden houses are the shelters, which protect the Danaids against the salt and the tempest (*δόμος ἅλα στέγων, Suppliants* 135). This could be a mirror image of the forest (*ἄλσος*) where the wooden trunks of the trees become means of protection and concealment during hunting games.

In the play the image of the sea, not only is illustrated as a mean of salvation for the Danaids' future, but also provides, through their wish, the aqueous environment where the son of Aegyptus may find their final disaster and death. The Danaids' revengeful spirit is expressed initially through their invocation to Zeus:

ἑσμὸν ὑβριστὴν Αἰγυπτογενῆ,

πρὶν πόδα χέρσῳ τῆ δ' ἐν ἀσώδει

θεῖναι, ξὺν ὄχῳ ταχυήρει

πέμψατε πόντονδ': ἔνθα δὲ λαίλαπι

χειμωνοτύπῳ, βροντῇ στεροπῇ τ'

ὀμβροφόροισίν τ' ἀνέμοις ἀγρίας

ἁλὸς ἀντήσαντες, ὄλοιντο,

but the insolent swarm of men born of Aegyptus before they set foot on this muddy soil with their swift-oared vessel, send them seaward, and there, under storm-buffeting hurricanes, thunder, lighting, and rain-charged winds, let them meet the cruel sea and perish

(*Suppliants* 30-36)

The violence of the Egyptians is abhorrent. The Danaids are unable to use any power against their will and wish for the weather and sea to support their plans once more. Besides the helpful weather, the Danaids ask Zeus to transform the sea from a mean of salvation to a pathway to Hades for their cousins. For Zeus, their 'champion from beyond the sea' (*Δῖον πόρτιν ὑπερ-/ πόντιον τιμάορ', Suppliants* 41-2), they wish to become their divine assistant. He is seen, here, not only as a 'god of approach' (*ἀφίκτωρ, Suppliants* 1), but also as a supportive vindicator. The Danaids' panic and desperation is increased when their barbarous suitors try to seize and subdue them. They curse them and invoke the divine powers to transform the salty sea into a space of punishment, loss, and non-return. But the gods remain absent and silent and their silent statues do not seem to share the Danaids' murderous desires.

3.1.3 The silent gods on the coast of Argos

The altar of the twelve gods at the agora of Athens was installed by Peisistratus, son of Hippias, during his archonship.[183] The sanctuary played a distinctive role as a place of asylum for suppliants[184] and as a central milestone from which distances from Athens were measured.[185] Besides the aesthetic and artistic qualities of its monumental presence, the statues' first and foremost function in the ancient Greek world, is to replace the absent original, through the 'persuasive power of representation'.[186]

The sanctuary of the gods in the Aeschylus' *Suppliants* is adjacent to the sea. But before returning to the issue its location, we need to digress slightly from the theme of the sea to think about some of the implications of statues and viewing in Greek religion. Statues not only transform and determine a natural environment to a cultural, social and religious territory, but as 'performative and efficacious agents',[187] also become receivers of mortal invocations for prosperity, salvation and desire for revenge. Sanctuaries, altars, and holy groves have the capacity to mark both the union and the distance between gods and mortals. In addition, statues sighted along a processional passage or at highly visible spaces, perform as communicators in a system of mutual exchanges.[188] The anthropomorphized bodies and faces of statues are fundamental iconic images of the Greek view of the divine, playing an active role in the destiny and lives of the mortals.

[183] Thucydides 6.54.6-7.
[184] For ancient references to the altar of twelve gods in agora at Athens as a space of refuge see Herodotus 6.108.4, Lycurgus 93, Diodorus 12.39.1, Plutarch *Pericles 31.2*. Also see Camp (1980), Rutherford (2013) Gadbery (1992, 447-489), Crosby (1949, 82-103 and 447-450).
[185] Herodotus 2,7.
[186] Steiner (2001,9).
[187] Steiner (2001, xii).
[188] Pedley (2005, 10).

In Aeschylus' *Suppliants*, the topographical position of the altar of the Gods Assembled, lies on an isolated peripheral location on the coastal zone of Lerna at the outskirts of Argos.[189] The seashore, as a sacred space in Aeschylus' *Suppliants*, is identified as an intermediate zone that not only reflects the juxtapositions among the different parties (Danaids, Egyptians, Argives), but also illustrates geographically the border between salvation and death. The sanctuaries, as altars of supplication on the edge of the *polis*, functioning often as places of asylum, entail a dual utility for both suppliants and the host city. The procedure of supplication, via a religious ritual, determines the social and political factors, which justify the final acceptance or rejection of the refugees' demands.

The Danaids and their father Danaus, anticipating, during their migration, a hospitable and friendly city to protect them, invoke, when they arrive, 'the gods of Argos who own this city, its land and its bright water' (*ὦ πόλις, ὦ γῆ, καὶ λευκὸν ὕδωρ,/ ὕπατοί τε θεοί, Suppliants* 22a-23) to accept their plea with a 'spirit of respect' (*δέξασθ' ἱκέτην/ τὸν θηλυγενῆ στόλον αἰδοίῳ, Suppliants* 28-29). While taking into account the dynamic function of theatrical convention, which may justify the possibility that the gods to whom the Danaids prayed are not those of statues visible on stage,[190] it is scarcely contestable that the sanctuary of the twelve statues, being in view before the audience from the start of the play, would not to be seen when the ship approaches the shore of Lerna and the band of the Danaids enter the scene. Standing above human height, 'upon the mound' (*πάγον*, *Suppliants* 189), and probably gazing towards the

[189] Lerna is one of Greece's oldest cities in the Argolid region. Pausanias, (2.38.4) and Plutarch (*Pyrrhus* 32.5) connect the beach south of Lerna as the place where Danaus and his daughters arrived.
[190] Bowen (2013, 143).

sea,[191] these statues are the first soulless human-like images that silently welcome the arriving company.

After their arrival and through their initial appeal to the gods and most prominently to Zeus, the Danaids imply continuously a visual contact between them and the divine. Although there is no clear evidence that these invocations provide a direct plea to the gods' monumental presence, the Danaids indicate that their sufferings are always under the surveillance of the gods. Zeus is the 'all-seeing father' (*πατήρ μοι παντόπτας, Suppliants* 139) who 'may he look with favour' upon their expedition (*ἐπίδοι προφρόνως/ στόλον ἡμέτερον, Suppliants* 1-2). The gods of the Danaids' forbears, who can 'see what is right', should hear them as well (*ἀλλά, θεοὶ γενέται/ κλύετ' εὖ τὸ δίκαιον ἰδόντες, Suppliants* 79), and 'clearly from on high' (*ὑψόθεν δ' εὖ κλύοι*, *Suppliants* 175). The 'seen' Olympians could ensure the maidens' salvation and deter an otherwise fallen destiny in the realms of the 'unseen' Hades.

The 'all-seeing' motif provides a crucial dramatic element. The image of the 'eyes' reveals stories of betrayal, escape, and murder. Like predators who remain invisible and hidden before attacking their prey, the gods stalk the wandering mortals leaving them to indulge in vain hopes in the face of a future, which has already been predetermined. In Aeschylus' *Suppliants* a visual interplay is revealed through the stories of Procne/Aëdone,[192] Io, and the Danaids. Besides the implicit comparison regarding their apparent or symbolic transformations, the 'eyes' determine their destiny and perform a key-role in evolution of their adventures. The Thracian King Tereus,

[191] This argument can be supported by the presence of numerous colossal Kouroi, standing at the edge of promontories like Sounion in Attica or on the islands and the coastlines of the ancient Greek world, which provide an image analogous to the image in this play of sculptures standing in a position overlooking the sea. According to Pevnick (2014, 56) these naked male statues play a significant role as a continuous reminder of Athens' naval, political, and financial supremacy under Pericles' authority. The statues of gods in Aeschylus' *Suppliants* mark both a religious and a political zone under divine and Pelasgus' power respectively.

[192] Variant versions of the myth are discussed in Bowen (2013,157).

husband of the princess of Athens Procne/Aëdone, rapes her sister Philomela and forever silences her by cutting her tongue. Unable to speak, Philomela sends, as a gift to Procne, an embroidered picture, which depicts her abhorrent seduction.[193] The eyes of the mythical Procne 'read' and decipher the message that her sister unveils to her. Io's sufferings start when her 'entwining' with Zeus was not obscured from Hera (*κἄκρυπτά γ' Ἥρας ταῦτα τἀμπαλάγματα, Suppliants* 296). The goddess transforms her into a cow and she is appointed as a guard, 'the one who sees all' (*τὸν πάνθ' ὁρῶντα φύλακ' ἐπέστησεν βοΐ, Suppliants* 303) of the primordial Argus, the watchman with multiple eyes. In the Danaids' adventures the 'all-seeing' motif is 'transferred' to Zeus[194] as their beneficial progenitor.

The symbolic significance of the 'eyes' is provided when Pelasgus uses the simile of the keen-sighted diver which is mentioned previously and also highlighted with a more negative connotation in the painted 'visible eyes' (*καὶ πρῷρα πρόσθεν ὄμμασιν βλέπουσ' ὁδόν, Suppliants* 716) on the Egyptians' ships that follow the Danaids' flight, implying not only their warlike intentions,[195] but also illustrating a personified image of the ship as a living anthropomorphe.[196] Nevertheless, it is the dominant images of the statues, which present a powerful construct of religious observation. Behind their expressionless faces and their glassy eyes, these silent figures portray a metaphysical world, which remains unresponsive to the agonies and warnings of the mortals.

[193] This famous myth was later made into an important tragedy called *Tereus* by Sophocles. The play has been lost, but several fragments has been recovered. See Lloyd-Jones, H. (1996). *Sophocles* III: fragments, 291-301.
[194] Zeitlin (1996, 155).
[195] Torr (2013, 69).
[196] As cited in Johansen and Whittle (1980 III, 77) the widespread notion of a ship as a living being, attested first in Greek by the epic epithet *πάρπιος* (*Il.* 2.637, *Od.* 9.125, 11.124, 23.271).

Seeking to ensure the protection and support of the Argives, the Danaids use the divine statues as crucial part of their plan. They warn that they will hang themselves from the statues of gods but this most awesome dramatic image proved to be a temporary threat. The religious pollution is prevented. The statues of the gods represent the only visible metaphysical presence in the play; and their dynamic stance, silent and inexplicable, provides a significant dramatic effect.[197] If silences in ancient Greek tragedy imply the character's decision to conceal emotions, intentions and thoughts, these statues would equally mirror the unforeseen divine will symbolically.

The faces of the standing gods, in contrast to the black-skinned masks of the Danaids, is a visually skilful sign that illustrates within the theatrical *skene*, two different aspects of the exotic and unpredictable 'other'.[198] The lifeless divine sculptures become, temporarily, the helpless victims of the Danaids' selfish purposes. Acting as revengeful chthonic divinities, the Danaids threaten to invoke and inflict widespread pollution on the sacred coastal territory and the broader land of Argos. The pictorial language of such a threat can admit various interpretations. One of the most prominent could be the strange union that could identify them not only as brides of death but also as 'brides of the divine'.

We should recognize here an occasion that could establish a new type of imagery in extant tragedy, where the visible union between the humans and the silent gods may be a spring of misery and pollution. The contact between the bodies of the Danaids' corpses and the soulless statues of the gods illustrates a reversed image of the union between Io and Zeus. In contrast with their mythical ancestor, this horrifying union will not evoke fertility and birth but catastrophic infection. Through the

[197] Taplin (1972, 76) stresses the significance of silent figure as the 'centre of dramatic attention' in ancient Greek tragedy.
[198] Hall (2006, 104) mentions the masking conventions, which portrays characters precisely as painted sculptures.

conventions of religious, social, and political principles, this possibility is avoided. The moral obligations 'above and beyond the concepts of reciprocity' between supplicants and the host city,[199] the democratic ethos of the 'persuasive' Argive king, and the fear for the wrath of Zeus function as significant factors in the prevention of the city becoming polluted and the death of the maidens. The image of the hanged maidens by the gods' statues reflects the two aspect of the same coin: 'the reciprocal exchanges between humans and immortals in Athenian religion'.[200] The mortal desires to be equal to the gods and the gods' personified behaviour as a part of a mortal's everyday life is a depiction of such a desire.

Metaphors and transformed identities are crucial patterns in Aeschylus' *Suppliants*. Shapes, forms, and stamps create mirror images of the world. Pelasgus' images of recollection, which are related to depictions of the 'other', divine or barbarian, make a powerful appeal to the visual sense of identities in the audiences' mind. Pelasgus in trying to justify the paradox contradiction between the Danaids' appearance and their origin as Argives, mentions various examples concerning their strangeness. One of these images of non-Greekness regards the Danaid as a 'plausible Cypriot impress stamped by male craftsmen on female dies' (*Κύπριος χαρακτήρ τ' ἐν γυναικείοις τύποις/ εἰκὼς πέπληκται τεκτόνων πρὸς ἀρσένων, Suppliants* 282-3). This Cypriot image, which is stamped on coin, may conceal an alternative interpretation. The coin is the most striking paradigm that identifies the reciprocal benefit behind each type of 'sacrifice', the underlying agony of Pelasgus' need to save his city from the divine wrath and the humans' vengeful spirit, the Danaids' plea for salvation and the gods' expectation of mortal inferiority. Although self-sacrifice in the ancient Greek world is

[199] Gould (1973, 75).
[200] Hall (2006, 100).

characterized as the most valuable gift to the gods,[201] the suicide of the Danaids underlines a destructive personal 'benefit' for them, through a sacrilegious act against the gods and the state of Argos. This coin will not become the ticket for Danaids' last journey to the Underworld.[202]

The commemorating power of the votive tablets is another image, which evokes puzzling thoughts in Pelasgus' interpretation of the Danaids' riddling words. The Danaids' 'throttling by hanging' (*ἐκ τῶνδ' ὅπως τάχιστ' ἀπάγξασθαι θεῶν, Suppliants* 465) as votive tablets, depicts the negative image of such a thanksgiving. The ancient traders travelling by sea, pay their offerings for their safe voyage before or after their wandering.[203] In the Danaids' imminent sacrilegious ritual, the young maidens are simultaneously the dedicators and the offering objects. Their gift is not a thank-offering action of respect or an invocation of a future blessing or, indeed, of a favourable return voyage. Their impending approach to the altar will be a polluted dedication and the votive corpses will be hanged by the statues in the same way as the tablets decorate the trees in the holy groves.

In her thought-provoking book *Dying for the Gods*, Green highlights the function of the human sacrifice in the Classical world.[204] Among the different kinds of sacrifice, she investigates death by asphyxiation.[205] In the dramatic narration of the ancient Greek tragedy, drowning, hanging or strangling and burial alive are different aspects of death that characterize voluntary or imposed deaths. In the case of suicide, the denial of breath, through these symbolic ways of death, illustrates a violent

[201] Green (2001, 28).
[202] The souls of the dead in order to enter the Underworld offer a coin, an obolus or a danake, to Charon.
[203] Rouse (1902, 82-3) describes an Athenian vase painting of the fifth century as illustrated in Harrison's *Mythology and Monuments of Early Athens, B* (343-5). The scene has been interpreted as a tradesman's thanksgiving. The worshipper hangs three tablets on the twigs of an olive tree.
[204] Green (2001).
[205] Green (2001, 113).

interruption of what is recognized as the vital principle that distinguishes existence from the inanimate. The Danaids' manipulative threats of hanging themselves by the divine statues, putting their belts as improvised nooses around their necks, could be interpreted as a violent 'denial of breath' under circumstances that do not satisfy them.[206] By connecting the vital breath with the wind of nature as an additional force to the mariners' hands and muscular performance, that serves their navigational route,[207] we could make a further useful observation. Although the motif of the wind helps the Danaids to escape from their sufferers travelling in calm waters in the same way as the on-breathing Zeus (*ἐπίπνοας, Suppliants* 17, 44, 577) absolves Io's torment, the Danaids, if Argives were to reject their supplication, would refuse to breathe to impose a yoke of death on their necks. The noose, which is constructed with their own belts (*τί σοι περαίνει μηχανὴ συζωμάτων;/ νέοις πίναξι βρέτεα κοσμῆσαι τάδε, Suppliants* 462-3), will be the murderous weapon that will unite them with Hades; a permanent inanimate yoking which is contrasted symbolically with their desperate desire for independence.[208]

Among the statues of the Gods Assembled, only four of them are named as part of the setting: Zeus, Apollo, Poseidon, and Hermes. It is paradoxical that although three Olympian goddesses are mentioned in the play, Hera, Aphrodite and Artemis, none of the six goddesses among the Twelve is identified among the decked-with-boughs statues.[209] Danaus, in his speech, indicates and justifies why every one of these masculine divine figures is called upon. During a scene with a striking meta-theatrical structure, the Danaids follow Danaus' 'stage directions' invoking the gods' protection and support for their salvation. The presence and reference to Poseidon is of a great

[206] Scodel (1998, 144) mentions that 'within Greek literature, suicide is the only effective way for a woman to resist the tendency to acquiescence'.
[207] Casson (1991, 3).
[208] King (1983,120) notes how the belt reflects the stages of Greek woman's life. Also Zeitlin (1996, 157) proposes that Danaids' intention to use their belts has the symbolic meaning which is connected with the moment when a girl loosens her belt in order to surrender her virginity.
[209] Johansen and Whittle (1989 II, 167), Bowen (2013,193).

concern not only because it bridges the distance between the sea and the land, but also because he determines the seashore as an intermediate zone between desperation and *soteria*.

Sanctuaries and shrines by the sea, which were dedicated to Poseidon, were well known in ancient Greek world.[210] Poseidon was the saviour of ships and both the holder and the shaker of the Earth. [211] The waterways in their beauty and vastness, as spheres of Poseidon's influence, are identified with multiple ancient activities such as religious ceremonies, maritime trade and naval warfare. The significance of the shipbuilding and seafaring as fundamental aspects of life in the ancient Greek world, and in close connection with the identification of the sea and the seashore as liminal territories, justifies the presence of various sites as sacred zones dedicated to Poseidon.[212] These, often isolated, topographical locations, promontories and coastal regions, sometimes not easily accessible by mortals, provide a neutral milieu suitable for communication between the primitiveness of nature and the civilized human world.

In Aeschylus' *Suppliants* Poseidon has already given his supportive sign to the Danaids by being an escort to their transition from Egypt to Greece (*ἀλλ' εὖ τ' ἔπεμψεν εὖ τε δεξάσθω χθονί, Suppliants* 219). Danaus recognizes him among the statues but does not name him. Instead he makes a reference to the god's trident as a synecdoche of his divine presence (*ὁρῶ τρίαιναν τήνδε σημεῖον θεοῦ, Suppliants* 218). As the ruler of the sea, his role is essential. If the Danaids succeed in persuading Poseidon to lend them his aid against their cousins, the salty sea will destroy their fleet and the Egyptians will be 'drawn into a pool of purple sea' (*λίμνᾳ δ' ἔμβαλε πορφυροειδεῖ, Suppliants* 529).

[210] Pausanias (10.36.8, 2.34.10, 2.38.4), Strabo (637).
[211] See the *Homeric Hymn 22 to Poseidon*.
[212] Schumacher (1993, 78) provides an adequate analysis concerning three related sanctuaries of Poseidon in Kalaureia, an island just of the coast of Troizen, Tainaron and Gerastos; and mentions their common function as places of refugee.

Poseidon played a prominent role in the lost satyr play of the tetralogy, *Amymone*, where the blameless Danaid resisted the chthonic satyr's attempt to violate her, but succumbed to Poseidon's pursuit of her virginity. Poseidon, being a capable hunter, captured his prey using his powerful weapon.[213] Intermixing references to myth, temporality and tragic irony, Aeschylus posits as a central theme of the satyr drama, that follows the Danaids' trilogy, a love story between two different worlds. The anonymous maiden of the chorus faces the lifeless statue of the god who will rape her, but their imminent union is hidden provisionally in the mist of an unpredictable future.

The mist, a meteorological phenomenon, common in coastal regions, hinders visibility and causes hazardous conditions in navigation. In Aeschylus' *Suppliants* Egypt is characterized as the 'land of mists';[214] the Danaids' harbour of departure (*ἀερίας ἀπὸ γᾶς, Suppliants* 75), and is connected, as a mirror image, with the upper physical environment of storm clouds as an 'upflown and unseen' destination of their flight (*νέφεσσι γειτονῶν Διός:/ τὸ πᾶν δ' ἄφαντος/ ἀμπετὴς ἀιδνὸς, Suppliants* 781). Via this route, the Danaids satisfy the desperate 'frantic desire to escape'[215] from their misery. The Danaids' 'ascent' to an invisible and distant high level enhances their intention to approach the world of gods and to receive their holy protection, even if this is a world of non-existence. The natural environment is dramatically transformed into a hunting region of perpetrators and victims. In this manner, it is worth reflecting that the clouds and mists are a visible mass of liquid droplets of water suspended in the atmosphere that synthesize, like the sea, a vast invisible realm on high with unpredictable weather transformations.

[213] As Pevnick (2014,14) pinpoints, trident, the three-toothed spear or fork probably first designed for fishing.
[214] Appolonius of Rhodes uses the same metonymy for Egypt (*Argonautika* 4.267-8).
[215] Murray (1958, 72).

The dualistic motif of life/light and death/darkness is marked respectively via a vertical dyadic demarcation between the upper and the lower realms of the *cosmos*. The Danaids' warning exemplifies this discrimination. If they do not 'reach the gods of Olympus' (*μὴ τυχοῦσαι θεῶν Ὀλυμπίων, Suppliants* 161), they approach, holding boughs of supplication, the 'most visitable of gods, the god of the dead' (*τὸν πολυξενώτατον/ Ζῆνα τῶν κεκμηκότων/ ἱξόμεθα σὺν κλάδοις, Suppliants* 156-8). The Danaids request protection and salvation, but if Zeus 'keeps his face turned away from their prayers' (*νῦν ἔχων παλίντροπον/ ὄψιν ἐν λιταῖσιν, Suppliants* 173-4), they wish to escape the condition of human life, travelling in realms where they are going to find a peaceful but permanent exile.

The statues, a religious and artistic personification of the divine, raised above the level of the orchestra and possibly behind it, could be characterized as a 'holy grove' (*ἱερὸν ἄλσος*) where the gods resemble trees. The persecuted Danaids, as wandering birds, enter the symbolic grove of Lerna as a space of security and concealment. Their act of supplication, bestowing boughs among the statues, reveals a kind of meta-theatrical activity, which enhances their deep desire to create an illusion of a protected environment. The boughs, decked with wool, not only imply a mean of supplication as a pure intention for salvation, but also become useful weapons that may ironically reflect their murderous instinct (*σὺν τοῖσδ' ἱκετῶν ἐγχειριδίοις/ ἐριοστέπτοισι κλάδοισιν, Suppliants* 21-22). Besides the boughs, their breast-bands and belts are another useful device in order to complete the 'decoration' of the setting (*νέοις πίναξι βρέτεα κοσμῆσαι τάδε, Suppliants* 463) if their application is to be rejected.[216] The votive tablets would be a commemorating sign of pollution able to transform the holy sanctuary into a space of

[216] Wyles (2011, 73) observes that 'an archetypally female piece of clothing being transformed (through symbolism rather than action) into a potential instrument of death and the power shift this implies'.

sacrilege; another ‘seen’ image of the Danaids’ lifeless bodies hanged disrespectfully by their divine ‘observers’.

The threats uttered by the young maidens are forcibly prevented and their desire to enact lethal violence against themselves or their enemies, is veiled. Through their final ode honouring the host city of Argos and celebrating their incorporation they sing hymns to prosperity and fertility. The Danaids avoid becoming brides of the Egyptians or Death, and could thus be identified as Nymphs of Argos connecting the mythic cult of Inachid Nymphs with the offspring of Io.

3.1.4 Danaids: The Water Nymphs of Argos

A mortal’s life is a constant cycle of emotional changes, experiences that determine thoughts and actions, and excruciating dilemmas that require choices between different options and perspectives. In highly uncomfortable situations of change, whether enforced or voluntary, the threat and the fear of an unpredictable future evoke doubts and raise, on reflection, the desire for survival, safety, and belonging. A man trying to decide the best course of action to achieve his goal and to avoid potential adverse outcomes uses multiple modes of behaviour. This conscious or unconscious mental or emotional game of transformation is illustrated in the world of Greek tragedy not only through the visible image of the performance but also through a dramatic mythic milieu of characters, vivid enough to inspire the audience’s creative imagination.

In Aeschylus’ *Suppliants*, the Danaids are motivated by fear of the sons of Aegyptus to leave Egypt. Arriving at Argos they become themselves the menace, which is able to evoke a horrifying pollution. They threaten to be a *miasma* to the Pelasgian land by hanging themselves on the altars of the gods. Causing anxiety to the king

Pelasgus, and consequently, in a broader dramatic field, to the *autochthonous* (indigenous) citizens of Argos, the Danaids's incorporation, finally, is partially achieved within the democratic city, avoiding their cousins' demands of endogamy.[217] Their vulnerable and sympathetic attitude, towards the local Greek population, inviting pity and protection, is very soon transformed into a dynamic warning against sacrilegious pollution and indirect destruction. The Danaids' feelings become increasingly demanding and violent. Behind their black-skinned mask is concealed the dual nature of their origin. Standing between two different worlds, the journey of the Danaids is not only a procedure through which they hope to procure salvation, but also an adventure in self-awareness. Adopting or using animal characteristics, archetypal similar patterns in mythic genealogies, and ambiguous emotional reactions, they create a strange mirror image of the female figure associated with the Nymphs, the deities of water.

The setting of Aeschylus' *Amymone*, the lost satyr play that accompanied the Danaids' trilogy, probably represented an idyllic natural environment, providing a 'colourful and fabulous world of boundless possibility'.[218] This unrestricted region could be illustrated as a 'pastoral setting', closely connected with a sacred shrine devoted to Poseidon or possibly a depiction of an aqueous habitat:[219] an exotic image of flowing rivers, ritual baths and caves. The extant fragmentary text of *Amymone*, in contrast with the well-known variations of the Danaids, calls attention to the importance of the reciprocal relationship between nymphs and Danaids, indicating important potential interpretations.[220]

[217] MacKinnan (1978, 74-82) provides a detailed analysis of the theories concerning the reasons for the Danaids' flight from Egypt. The fear of incest, as a significant motivation for the Danaids' flight, is supported by Thomson (1941, 298-309).
[218] Sutton (1980, 353) uses these epithets to describe the countryside and the exotic landscape as a visualized escape from the 'realistic' environment of the tragedy.
[219] Sutton (1974, 199).
[220] Aeschylus' *Amymone* TrGF 3, FF 13-15.

Bacharova's article analyses how deviant features of the supplication scene allude to the Danaids' role as nymphs as developed in Aeschylus' *Amymone* and in fragment 168 from Aeschylus' lost play *Semele*.[221] Keuls provides a striking connection between the Danaids' prayers for prosperity in the final song of *Suppliants*,[222] with the nymph Amymone, and with the later tradition of the Danaids' punishment in the Underworld, when they had eternally to carry water in leaking pots. Murray mentions that the recurrent motif of fertility and motherhood supports the role of woman as the transmitter of life, realising the destiny of Io and Hypermnestra,[223] while Garvie notes the motif of rivers as a significant symbol of fertility.[224] Zeitlin's provocative approach identifies the numerous allusions to water elements in the play and, also connecting rivers with fertility, enhances the link between the Danaids's transformation into citizen wives with the foundation of the Thesmophoria at the end of the trilogy.[225] Symbolic significances are also underlined in Harrison's strand of research, which identifies the Danaids as well-nymphs and projections of the ancient rain-maker ceremonies.[226]

In view of these interpretations, it is my intention to demonstrate, specifically in *Suppliants*, the imagery techniques through which Aeschylus may have integrated, by allusion, the supernatural and metaphysical figure of the water-nymph into his poetic structure. These invisible deities, which would have been well-known to audiences through mythical narrations, cults and folklore, form an effective archetypal pattern which helps us to perceive the Danaids' complicated emotional state.

[221] Bacharova (2009, 289-310), Aeschylus' *Semele* TrGF 3, FF 168.
[222] Keuls (1974, 70).
[223] Murray (1958, 60).
[224] Garvie (2006, 71).
[225] Zeitlin 1996, 163), (1992, 234-238).
[226] Harrison (1927, 529f.).

Larson, in her groundbreaking book about Greek nymphs, based on a wide range of literary and archaeological evidences, investigates and discriminates between the multiple and often contradictory aspects of these 'highly ambiguous' creatures.[227] Through addressing the problematic issue of definition, she demonstrates various fundamental characteristics, which suggest clear and apt associations with the Danaids in Aeschylus' *Suppliants*.

The worship of nymphs in the ancient Greek world was conceptually aligned with a physical setting which ranges across rivers, mountains and caves. Between mythopoetic illusions and topographic realities, nymphs inhabit the indeterminate zones of the human imagination. Inhabiting this wide spatial spectrum, nymphs are often depicted as unwilling brides chased by masculine hunters. Through archetypical myths of capture, such as the myths of Peleus and the Nereid Thetis, Aiakos and the Nereid Psamathe, or narratives about heroes' sexual desires for hamadryads, the tree-dwelling nymphs evoke obvious similarities with the Danaids as harassed maidens trying to escape from their pursuers' 'taming'.[228]

Although, through a variety of images, the symbolic connection with trees and forests in Aeschylus' *Suppliants* implies a space of hunting, revenge, and mourning, it is the powerful presence of the river as a dynamic watercourse and a personified male deity which haunts the Danaids' life. If the sea is a method of both contact and separation, the river with its diverging paths creates an intricate system of ever-flowing energy, equally capable of cultivating fields, hopes and the evils of disaster.

[227] Larson (2001, 4).

[228] Larson analyses the capture motif as presented in two distinct traditions about the myth of Peleus and Thetis, known in modern folklore as the 'swan maiden' type. She also cites different sources concerning stories of hamadryad nymphs who are exposed to dangerous and impending disaster when a masculine hero appears either as a saviour or a sacrilegious destroyer.

In ancient Greek mythology rivers are often connected with mythic male deities who perform a central role in local genealogies. Although 'the Nile does not raise the same people as the Inachus' (*Νεῖλος γὰρ οὐχ ὅμοιον Ἰνάχῳ γένος/ τρέφει, Suppliants* 497-8), both of them provide strong procreative powers. The image of the river as masculine figure is multivalent: it might imply paternal protection if related to a young girl, but could also evoke anxious emotions relating to forced sexual union for an adult woman. Similarly, although both Nymphs and Danaids are described as 'daughters' of Zeus, their divine father is also depicted as a masculine archetype of sexual vitality. This can be justified by the iconographic sources, which depict rivers as horned males or as bulls with human faces.[229]

The *eros* of Zeus for the daughter of Inachus, the nymph Io, leads him to transform her to a cow in order to defeat the jealous intrigues of Hera. Some myths refer to Zeus' sexual visits to Io in the shape of a bull. The metamorphoses of a divine masculine and a mortal maiden into a bull and cow, respectively, are also mentioned early on in the play by the Danaids. The maidens invoke Epaphos as Zeus's calf, and identify him as the flower–feeding son of their forbear, the cow Io (*Δῖον πόρτιν ὑπερ-/ πόντιον τιμάορ', ἶνίν τ'/ ἀνθονομούσας προγόνου/ βοὸς, Suppliants* 41-44). Later in the play, Danaids characterize Zeus as a 'bull eager to mount' (*πρέποντα βουθόρῳ ταύρῳ δέμας, Suppliants* 301). The various animal metaphors and similes, which are expressed by the characters and chorus throughout the play, recall the stories of Io and Procne, reflecting their fear and anxiety when faced with masculine sexual violence. Bird imagery is extensive (*Suppliants* 62, 223-6, 510, 751, 800-1) and is developed principally in the motif of the flock of doves, which are pursued by a hawk (*Suppliants* 60ff, 223ff).

[229] Larson (2001, 99).

The play starts by giving specific information about the Danaids' origins. The mouth of the Nile (*Suppliants* 3-4) illustrates the landscape of their previous life. The abundant waters nurture the soil of Egypt, its inhabitants, and its animals.[230] However, the Danaids are forced by their rapacious cousins to abandon the Nile, in the same way that Procne was transformed into a nightingale 'shut away by the green rivers' (*ἅτ' ἐπί χλωρῶν ποταμῶν εἰργομένα, Suppliants* 63). It could be suggested that in both cases the image of the river represents a symbolic region of fertility. Rejecting a violent subjugation and a paranormal sexual union, the Danaids refuse their gendered role as married women and remove themselves far away from the threatening springs, thereby preserving their virginity, remaining 'infertile' and childless.

Vasunia, in his seminal book *The Gift of the Nile*,[231] considering the nexus of relationships between Egypt and Greece, draws on Aeschylus' *Suppliants* as significant literary evidence in order to explore issues of ethnicity, identity and death. Discussing Zeitlin's essay, which concerns the 'feminist perspective' on the politics of *eros* in the Danaids trilogy,[232] Vasunia emphasizes the reproductive powers of Egypt as a locus of sacred purity, fertility, and birth.[233] The abundant and flooding waters of the Nile are identified not only as symbolic seed that nurtures and fertilizes the dry land, but also as a proper dramatic space for sexual unions and childbirths. Io's story enhances this perspective in the Danaids' perception of Egypt. Under these circumstances, the Nile is transformed for them into a dangerous territory which can, in a sense, represent a space similar to a frightening Underworld where they will receive endless punishment in the level of an undesirable marriage.

[230] The waters of the Nile are described as 'cattle-rearing' (*ἀλφεσίβοιον ὕδωρ, Suppliants* 855).
[231] Vasunia (2001).
[232] Zeitlin (1996, 123-171).
[233] Vasunia (2001, 43).

When they refer to Procne's unnatural behaviour in killling her own child, the Danaids may also be making allusion to their inappropriate status as life-producing figures. They wish to remain 'unwed and untamed' (*ἄγαμον ἀδάματον, Suppliants* 143) and do not want the waters of the Nile to affect them with its generative power. The fertile streams evoke a threatening image of their being bound to unpredictable consequences. The impending marriage, which foreshadows a life of misery and suffering and probably death, should be avoided, even if only temporarily. The Danaids' flight could be characterized as a desperate struggle for survival for themselves, for their impending husbands, and for their potential children. The Danaids, symbolically, avoid being drowned in the waters of the flooding river and manage to find the only way out for their *soteria*; a secure fluid-pathway that leads them out to sea.

As Vasunia states, 'death itself must be compared to a 'marital' *telos*',[234] and the Danaids' escape from Egypt is the most striking justification of their desire to survive. The Nile, the safe milieu of their childhood, has been transformed from a protective father into a violent force, which threatened their virginity. The Danaids remain children (*παῖδες, Suppliants* 176, 600, 980 and *τέκνα, Suppliants* 739, 753) and daughters (*κόραι, Suppliants* 188).[235] Under Danaus' rule, they form a divine alliance and gain support for their choice. In place of the prenuptial baths, symbolic of virginal devotion to the divine river, the Danaids' process of maturation is perhaps illustrated instead by their maritime journey to the Argive plain.

Arriving in the land of their ancestor Io, the suppliant Aeschylean maidens confront a new dramatic environment. The folklore of the dry Argos, the fountain-

[234] Vasunia (2001, 50).
[235] Bowen (2013, 184) mentions that the world *παῖς* is the common word for 'slave' and observes the dependent status of both slaves and children.

nymphs, the shores of Lerna, and the murderous springs compounds the mythic landscape as the background setting to their own reality. The Danaids anticipate this new homeland to be 'more friendly than any other' (*τίν' ἂν οὖν χώραν εὔφρονα μᾶλλον, Suppliants* 19).

In the *parodos*, the Danaids' prayers appeal to the gods 'who own this city, its land and its bright waters' (*ὦ πόλις, ὦ γῆ, καὶ λευκὸν ὕδωρ, Suppliants* 23). The limpid fresh water, flowing in the shallow sunlit streams of the Argive plain, is invoked as a significant element of the geographic realm that they hope will be a proper asylum for their 'sun-struck brood' (*ἡλιόκτυπον γένος, Suppliants* 155). Water is required for life to start and for life to continue. The ever-flowing streams signify an endless motion of energy, which stems from an ever-living fountain. Nymphs are associated with water sources in the same way that the Danaids inhabit territories near rivers, lakes and the sea. The powerful healing power of water provides an environment, which is both protective and secure.

When the band of virgins achieve their goal of being accepted into the city of Argos, their celebratory song grants the perpetual flow of the ancient stream of Erasinos - a meaning different from that of the Nile. The threating image of Nilotic 'fertility', as expressed in the play previously, is transformed into prayers for the prosperity of Argos. The daughters of Danaus, having succeeded in preserving their virginity, transfer their worship and their allegiance from the Nile to Argos, adopting an optimistic role as human nymphs who bless Argos with prosperity and fecundity, and pray for justice and liberation for themselves.

Taking into consideration this transformation, it is important to highlight the similarities between the Danaids and *Erinyes* (the Furies). The attention that the

Danaids pay to the chthonic gods of Argos has multiple implications. One interpretation might concern the importance of the earth as part of a cosmic chain and the place where mortals' corpses are transformed to dust, soil and blossom (*anthos*), reflecting the procedure of natural rebirth and fertility. The Danaid's reference to these invisible deities, 'both the gods above and gods of earth, grave-controllers heavy with vengeance' (*ὕπατοί τε θεοί, καὶ βαρύτιμοι/ χθόνιοι θήκας κατέχοντες, Suppliants* 24-25), not only illustrates their respect to the world of the Mysteries and the chthonic powers of the Underworld, but also expresses the close relationship between them and '*theoi georgikoi'* (Gods of agriculture).

However, another possible interpretation of this appeal could justify the suggestion above that Danaids and Erinyes have many common characteristics. The patriarchal power and the fear of masculine domination are elements of the oppressed situations shared by both companies of maidens. The two groups reject the bonds of marriage and adopt, directly or indirectly, animal characteristics as a dramatic expression of their feral natures. They are both sets of 'alien' women: emotionally violent and religiously ambiguous. Their transformation from truculent virgins to perpetual forces of fecundity depicts the role of these childless (*παῖδες ἄπαιδες,* Aeschylus' *Eumenides* 1033) maidens as beneficial to the *polis*, which is going to be their permanent home. The Erinyes are persuaded by the masculine goddess Athena to become beneficial forces for Athens. In the same way the Danaids are convinced by the civic figure of Pelasgus to be the Modest Goddesses (*Semnai Theai*) of Argos instead of destroyers.[236]

[236] For the common characteristics shared by the virgin choruses of Aeschylus see Maclachlan and Fletcher (2007, 23-39). The relationship between Erinyes and the Danaids is also observed by Zeitlin (1992, 123-171).

The role of the Nymphs as the earliest autochthonous ancestors in local genealogies of Argos also recalls the description of both the Danaids and the Erinyes as archetypal agents of colonization, restoration, and purification. The final song of Aeschylus' *Suppliants* is a hymn to prosperity as a result of the symbiosis between the Danaids and Pelasgians:

ποταμοὺς δ' οἳ διὰ χώρας

θελεμὸν πῶμα χέουσιν πολύτεκνοι,

λιπαροῖς χεύμασι γαίας

τόδε μειλίσσοντες οὖδας.

The rivers which pour their willing draught

across the country, proliferating children,

sweetening the soil of this land

with their gleaming streams.

(*Suppliants* 1026-1029)

The water imagery at the end of the play is prominent, and indicates that the land of Argos has the capacity to be untouched by diseases, mimicking the potency of the waters of the Nile (*νόσοις ἄθικτον, Suppliants* 561).[237] The word *ἄθικτον* corresponds admirably with the dynamic use of touch within the play as the prerequisite to any kind of union, whether enforced or desirable. Zeitlin rightly observes 'feminine

[237] Keuls (1974,70) and Conacher (1996, 108) link the water allusions to the nymph Amymone.

untouchability' as a striking motif throughout the tragedy of the Danaids.[238] She also mentions the use of the hand as an important image, one which evokes feelings of threat, fear or consolation.[239]

The Danaids connect their presence to agrarian prosperity and human fecundity. Honouring the rivers of the Argive plain and blessing the region of Inachus, the water nymphs of Argos not only save their own lives but, simultaneously, become the saviours of their host city. Nevertheless, Ares lurks as a grim reaper to bear the harvest of death in fertile fields (*Ἄρη,/ τὸν ἀρότοις θερί-/ ζοντα βροτοὺς ἐν ἄλλοις, Suppliants* 636-638). The abyss of the Alcyonian Lake of the Lernean region, if viewed as an archetypal landscape of the Danaids' story, could be another reflection of Pelasgus' diving into the deep sea.[240] The ambiguous nature of the Danaids' *psyche* hides, in its depths, a prospective murder, unlike the sobriety that Pelasgus seeks in the symbolic depths of his mind.

[238] Zeitlin (1990, 105).
[239] Zeitlin (1996, 148, n68).
[240] Pausanias (II. 37, 5-6) in his descriptions refers to the bottomless Alcyonian Lake as the abyss where Dionysus descends into Hades to bring up Semele.

3.2 Euripides' *Andromache*

3.2.1 Introduction

τάς τ' ἄλλας Ἀσίας . [.]δε . αν κλέος ἄφθιτον·

Ἔκτωρ καὶ συνέταιρ[ο]ι ἄγοισ' ἐλικώπιδα

Θήβας ἐξ ἱέρας Πλακίας τ' ἀ [π' ἀι]ν <ν>άω

ἄβραν Ἀνδρομάχαν ἐνὶ ναῦσιν ἐπ' ἄλμυρον

πόντον·

and of the rest of Asia…undying fame.

Hector and his companions are bringing the lively-eyed, graceful Andromache from holy Thebe and ever-flowing Placia

in their ships over the salt sea;

(Sappho fr.44, 4-7)[241]

The above fragment is one of the fullest fragments of Sappho, one of the most prolific lyric poets, who lived on the island of Lesbos in the 7th century BC.[242] It describes the wedding of the royal Trojan prince Hector to Andromache. The poem portrays the mighty glory of Asia through a joyful ceremony, but the luxury and wealth of 'unceasing fame' (*κλέος ἄφθιτον*) also hints at feelings of fear and uncertainty through

[241] Campell (1982, 88-89) *Greek Lyric*, Loeb Vol. 1.
[242] There are two complete poems among Sappho's works: Fragment 1, the *Hymn to Aphrodite* and the new "Brothers' poem", which has been found on a 3rd century A.D. papyrus.

mirror images and ambiguous words.[243] The bride's sea-journey from the Cilician Thebes to Troy, as a symbolic rite of passage from maidenhood to marriage, raises multiple interpretations as indicated in a plethora of other sea-journeys in ancient Greek tragedy.[244]

The gold-bedecked bridal procession could be a sign that prophesies the final destruction of the godlike spouses (*θεοεικέλο[ις*, Sappho fr.44, l. 21) and is closely mirrored in the ornamental luxury of Hermione's entrance in Euripides' *Andromache* (147-153) as another example of unfulfilled expectations and marriages with unsuccessful endings. Andromache's bridal march could also reflect, from the audience's perspective, the invincible army of the Persians that crossed the wide-pathed sea under the orders of the arrogant Xerxes, as well as with the victorious return voyage of Greeks who faced, for their atrocities in Troy, the most vengeful divine retaliation in the Aegean Sea (Aeschylus' *Agamemnon* 648-660). The dysfunctional erotic unions between the mighty Greek generals and their Trojan concubines triggered a cycle of retribution and the protagonists of these temporary relationships were often doomed to failure or death. The ceremonial departure of these materialistic, oriental marches created the appropriate conditions for the 'god's reversal of fortunes' (Aeschylus' *Persians* 158, 903-7). The aura of war destroys nations, families, and individuals. If death is absent, mortals, identified by their roots, continue to live and follow the routes of an unpredictable journey of courage, sorrow, and chance.

[243] Schrenk (1994, 143-150), in examining the connection between Sappho's fragment 44 and Homer's description of the wedding between Hector and Andromache in the *Iliad*, mentions the multiple elements that suggest the link between marriage and death.

[244] The bride's sea-journey could also provide an effective parallel to the transition rites as part of the initiatory rituals during the ceremonies in the festivals of Arkteia. The 'travelling maidens' like Iphigenia and the Danaids, similarly to the married women like Helen and Andromache after the destruction of Troy, are removed from their households, forcibly or voluntarily, and subjected to a 'journey' as a trial in order to be incorporated again into a 'civilized' society. On the rites of passage see Padilla (1999).

Haunted by the ten-year Trojan War and its catastrophic consequences for Greeks and Trojans, Euripides' *Andromache* is a 'full circle story.'[245] It deals with the moral, psychological, and sociopolitical issues of a world which has to confront its historical, mythical, and religious past in peacetime. The characters of the play, victorious or defeated, are the survivors of the Trojan War, but the conditions of their 'tragic' present force them to endure loss, desperation and disappointment. After the fall of Troy, Andromache is no longer the honoured bride of Hector; she becomes the concubine of Neoptolemus and mother of his only child. The sea journey from Troy to Greece is the start of an exile to enslavement, loneliness and sorrow. Andromache's presence in Phthia threatens Hermione's dysfunctional marriage and evokes to her feelings of anxiety, jealousy, and antagonism. The imminent arrival of Neoptolemus could have reversed the development of events but the grandson of Peleus arrives on stage only as a lifeless body after his macabre murder at Delphi, under the direction of his rival Orestes. Mortals anticipate their own *soteria* but the precarious human world, a mix of violence, cowardice, and *hubris*, reduces them to sorrow and desolation. In Euripides' *Andromache* the salvation comes from the sea.[246] The restorative intervention of the sea-goddess Thetis leads to an unexpected transformation of *threnos* to *apotheosis*.

The holy monument of Thetis, the setting of the tragedy, acquires a crucial role as a background tableau. Far away from the sea, located in Phthia, a district of Thessaly, this sanctuary provides a visual representation of sea and salvation. The altar becomes not only Andromache's shelter of protection but also the place of the divine epiphany of Thetis at the end of the play. In this dramatic environment the play unites spatially

[245] Allan (2000,19).
[246] Thetis' landing on stage is announced by the women of the chorus. Her divine arrival, probably with the use of the *mechane,* justifies her presence travelling through 'the bright sky' (*Andromache*, 1228). Nevertheless, her aqueous origin determines the sea as her point of departure.

distinct worlds. This plurality helps to reveal how *Eris* (strife and discord) affects the destiny of three families whose stories dominate the Trojan War, its trivial origin, and its disastrous aftermath.[247]

The first part of the following section aims to discuss the function of Thetis' monument as a convenient dramatic device capable of expressing her unifying role, literally and symbolically, through the prism of her consoling arrival as a *dea ex machina* at the end of the play. The second part examines how Euripides creates a mythical dramatic locus comprised of islands, caves, and the sea in order to illustrate spaces of immortality in the audience's geographic world. The final section will explore the relationships between the islander Achilles and the aquatic scenes which are underlined in Euripides' *Andromache*.

3.2.1.1 Waiting for Thetis [248]

Euripides' *Andromache* is set amidst an atmosphere of an imminent arrival. The Trojan princess possessed by Neoptolemus as 'a choice spear-prize from the plunder of Troy' (*δορὸς γέρας/ δοθεῖσα λείας Τρωϊκῆς ἐξαίρετον*, *Andromache* 14-15) anticipates, in a mood of anxious waiting, his return from the Delphic oracle where he has made amends with Loxias for his former errors.[249] Andromache's enforced erotic union with the son of Achilles raises the wrath of his legitimate wife Hermione, who ruthlessly threatens to kill the mistress of her husband and their child. Andromache, bereft of family and

[247] Storey (1989, 24) suggests that Andromache is a 'Tale of Three Houses'.
[248] Mossman (1996, 143-156), in her article 'Waiting for Neoptolemus: The Unity in Euripides' *Andromache*', discusses the variety of different ways of asserting *Andromache's* unity, supporting the idea that the central figure is Neoptolemus, following the suggestion made by Hartung in 1844 and developed by Friedlander in 1926, by Pohlenz in 1947, and to some extent by Friedrich in 1953.
[249] Neoptolemus went to Apollo the first time to demand reparation for his father's death. The second trip to Delphi reveals a crucial example of divine vindictiveness as collaborative force, or a striking chance for humans to commit atrocities. Neoptolemus' recognition of his mistakes is rejected by the insulted Apollo, who then lends his support to the destruction of this formely arrogant mortal.

friends, seeks succor in a hostile land. The shrine of Thetis becomes her own island in a turbulent sea of evils.

If we consider the variety of persons and themes, which scholars have suggested creates the unity of the play, we could draw the conclusion that there is actually an intricate and fertile web of actions and relationships that define and transform the evolution of the plot, producing a dynamic dramatic realm. For Mossman the central figure of the play is the absent Neoptolemus, whereas Erbse supports that the 'real hero' of the play is Andromache.[250] Norwood and Garzya think that the Spartan princess Hermione is the character that unifies the three distinct parts of the tragedy.[251] On the other hand, the lack of central hero, during the whole play, has convinced certain scholars to suggest that the unity stems from a dominant theme. Kovacs focuses his interpretation on the house of Peleus;[252] Boulter suggests that the play addresses the definitions of *sophia* (wisdom) and *sophrosyne* (prudence),[253] while Storey refers to the theme of domestic disharmony.[254] The thematic integration is also suggested by Kitto, who explains the unattractive portrayal of the Spartan characters as a result of anti-Spartan propaganda,[255] whereas Stevens observes that the main theme is the disastrous aftermath of the Trojan War.[256]

Supporting the idea that tragedy, as a work of art, has more than one basic axis and that there need not be only one particular motif that ensures the unity of a play, it could be suggested that Euripides' *Andromache* is a *polymorphic* tragedy, which explores a plethora of interdependent themes, affairs, and quarrels. Conflicts threaten to

[250] Erbse (1966, 276-97). This view also supported by Golder (1983, 123-133).
[251] Norwood (1954,46), Garzya (1953, 23-4).
[252] Kovacs (1980, 75-83).
[253] Boulter (1966, 51-8).
[254] Storey (1989, 16-27).
[255] Kitto (1961, 230-236).
[256] Stevens (1971,13).

dissolve not only the structure of the plot, but also the liaisons among nations, families, and friends. The *eris* (strife) is, undoubtedly, the initial cause that sets in motion a divine discord when the sea goddess Thetis is loved by two brothers, the Olympian Zeus and the god of the sea Poseidon. When Themis reveals that Thetis is destined to bear a son mightier than his father, the two gods gave her to the mortal king Peleus. The unbridgeable gap between mortals and gods, although 'veiled' in *Andromache*, is clearly reflected through this problematic union of Peleus and Thetis. In view of these facts, my intention is to discuss the very suggestive role of Thetis, through her shrine as a spatial symbol, and her metaphysical appearance as *dea ex machina*, supporting the idea that she is another figure whose presence haunts the whole play and is instrumental in creating its unity.[257]

The visible setting of Euripides' *Andromache* consists of two buildings: the *skene* which represents the house of Neoptolemus, and another building that functions as the shrine of Thetis with its component parts of the altar and the goddess's statue.[258] The district, where the royal house and the sanctuary are located, is called Thetideion, the land where the 'sea-born Thetis lived with Peleus apart from humans' (*ἵν' ἡ θαλασσία/ Πηλεῖ ξυνῴκει χωρὶς ἀνθρώπων Θέτις, Andromache* 17-18). Although the exact location of the Thetideion remains unknown, there is evidence that it was a real region as it is mentioned in accounts of battles at Cynoscephalae.[259]

In *Andromache,* the Thetideion represents a memorial space of the mythical wedding ceremony between the divine Thetis and the mortal Peleus. The shrine and its

[257] Allan (2000, 60) claims that the possibility of Thetis as unifying figure 'is not actually intended as a serious proposal' but he supports the idea that 'she contributes something to the complex interconnection of the play'. Although Allan mentions some examples of this 'contribution' he has not sufficiently developed why this suggestion is not plausible.
[258] Lloyd (1994, 11). Stevens (1971, 83) supports that 'the shrine need not be a separated building with entrance'. For the position of the altar see also Hourmouziades (1965, 49).
[259] Plut. *Pel.* 32; Polyb. 18.20.2-8 (as cited in Lloyd 1994, 11). See also Stamatopoulou's research about Thessaly's archaeological evidence (2007, 211-236 and 2011, 73-84).

altar also acquire, during the play, a significant function as the central point of the action: a space of abandonment, supplication and waiting. The holy precinct is created by Euripides in order to illustrate a symbolic space, while it simultaneously becomes the centre of a broader dramatic world, which extends from the shores of Troy and the Black Sea to the Molossian land, Delphi and the caves of Mount Pelion. In addition the altar (*Andromache* 162, 260) of the holy sanctuary acquires a dynamic function as a 'stage of *agon*' and a space of imminent punishment, unexpected arrivals and reunions. The open-air monument of Thetis is a substitute for her position inside the chambers of the palace. Her marital bed has remained empty but not as a result of a war expedition or the losses of its aftermath. Thetis deserted the house of Peleus not for another husband like the Spartan Helen or her daughter Hermione but for her physical environment, the aqueous palace of her father Nereus (*Andromache*, 1232).[260]

Thetis' sanctuary also provides a visual point where the mythical past links with the dramatic present and a space where the whole story begins. The celebration of the joyful union between Thetis and Peleus is the crucial event where the goddess Eris instigates the rivalry among the three goddesses, Hera, Aphrodite and Athena. The mythical beauty contest on Mountain Ida, well known as The Judgment of Paris, is not only an archetypal story of female rivalry, but also signifies the beginning of a cycle, which led to the abduction of Helen and the disastrous Trojan War.[261] The enforced decision of the young Trojan prince is the moment that temporarily raised him to a status equal to the gods.[262] During his contact with the divine as judge, Paris arouses a female rivalry that could be a mythical reflection of the quarrel between Andromache and Hermione as performed within the dramatic present of the play. The matrimonial

[260] Ar. *Cl.* 1067-9; Homer *Il.* 1.18.
[261] The story was previously mentioned by Homer in *Iliad* 24.
[262] Sorum (1995, 373) points out that Paris' Judgment is 'a moment when gods and man come into contact'. For a comprehensive study of the Judgment of Paris see also Stinton (1965).

hymns are transformed to woes and grief. The war empties the marital beds, flooding them with tears. One of the most poetic images that illustrates this transformation, with an aura of tragic irony, is Andromache's elegiac lament:

ἆς ἕνεκ', ὦ Τροία, δορὶ καὶ πυρὶ δηιάλωτον

εἶλέ σ' ὁ χιλιόναυς Ἑλλάδος ὀξὺς Ἄρης

καὶ τὸν ἐμὸν μελέας πόσιν Ἕκτορα, τὸν περὶ τείχη

εἵλκυσε διφρεύων παῖς ἁλίας Θέτιδος:

αὐτὰ δ' ἐκ θαλάμων ἀγόμαν ἐπὶ θῖνα θαλάσσας,

δουλοσύναν στυγερὰν ἀμφιβαλοῦσα κάρᾳ.

πολλὰ δὲ δάκρυά μοι κατέβα χροός, ἀνίκ' ἔλειπον

ἄστυ τε καὶ θαλάμους καὶ πόσιν ἐν κονίαις.

For her sake, o Troy, the swift host of Greece with its

thousand ships

took and destroyed you with spear and fire,

along with my husband Hector (wretched me!), whom

the son of sea-born Thetis in his chariot dragged round

the walls;

and I myself was led from my bedroom to the shore

of the sea,

putting hateful slavery about my head.

Many tears ran down my cheeks when I left

my city and my bedroom and my husband in the dust.

(*Andromache*, 105-112)

This is the only example of the elegiac metre in all of the extant ancient Greek tragedy. It is noteworthy to mention that its lyric quality is inextricably connected with the theme of the sea. In her elegiac lament, which is sung in *epodic* strophes and probably accompanied by *aulos*, Andromache recalls the sea as a space of destruction that hosts her tears.[263] Thetis (*Θέτιδος*) and sea (*θαλάσσας*) have an emphatic position at the end of lines. Furthermore the word *θαλάμων*, which is mentioned twice, through its aural connection with the word *θαλάσσας*, may symbolically highlights the reversed route of the journey as it was described in Sappho's lyric song.[264]

Andromache describes how the multitudinous Greek fleet, arriving at the shores of Troy, wrought abhorrent destruction: the barbaric, brutal murder of Hector by the Greek hero Achilles, his corpse dragged in the wild dust by the son of the sea-goddess.[265] All of Andromache's misfortunes arrive from the sea, and at the same time the sea is the pathway to her new life. Enslaved, widowed, and childless, Andromache

[263] On the *elegiacs* in Euripides' *Andromache* see Page (1936, 206-23).
[264] On Andromache's departure from Troy, as a perverted bridal journey, see Seaford (1987, 106-130).
[265] We should not overlook the correlation between the wild dust, where the body of the helpless Hector is dragged by Achilles' chariot when swift Ares (*ὀξὺς Ἄρης*) captured Troy (*Andromache* 103-107), with the ashes of the dead soldiers of the Greek army that Ares sent back from Ilium to their loved ones, as mentioned by the chorus in Aeschylus' *Agamemnon* (*ὁ χρυσαμοιβὸς δ' Ἄρης σωμάτων/ καὶ ταλαντοῦχος ἐν μάχῃ δορὸς/ πυρωθὲν ἐξ Ἰλίου/ φίλοισι πέμπει βαρὺ/ ψῆγμα δυσδάκρυτον ἀν-/ τήνορος σποδοῦ γεμί-/ ζων λέβητας εὐθέτους*, 438-444).

starts a 'perverted bridal journey'[266] to a new land, against her will, at another woman's command, and without Hector, a husband to protect her 'from the day of slavery.' As Hector predicts in the *Iliad*, Andromache will be 'punished' by being forced to carry water from a foreign spring to her house of slavery.[267] This way of punishment is not because she had killed her husband, as the Danaids do in one version of the myth, but because she was the loyal wife of the best warrior 'of the horse-taming Trojans.'

In Euripides's version, the undeserved slavery into which the unprotected Andromache falls, forces her to sleep with Neoptolemus. But since he married Hermione, Andromache has been hounded, cruelly, by Neoptolemus' Spartan wife. It seems plausible to suggest that the fear of childlessness has a profound impact on how the characters of the play experience situations and dilemmas. The juxtaposition of Hermione's childlessness with Andromache's status as mother of Neoptolemus' only son precipitates inescapable rivalries and troubles.[268] For Andromache, her life in Phthia is an 'endlessly day of slavery' but all her misfortunes have sprung from the 'marital' status as the third person in a shared marriage. The 'hysterical'[269] and 'neurotic'[270] Hermione, delivering her chauvinistic first speech, threatens to kill her and warns her:

ἢν δ' οὖν βροτῶν τίς σ' ἢ θεῶν σῷσαι θέλῃ,

δεῖ σ' ἀντὶ τῶν πρὶν ὀλβίων φρονημάτων

πτῆξαι ταπεινὴν προσπεσεῖν τ' ἐμὸν γόνυ,

σαίρειν τε δῶμα τοὐμὸν ἐκ χρυσηλάτων

[266] Lloyd (1994, 114). Seaford (1987, 129-30).
[267] Homer, *Il*. 6.456-63.
[268] Rabinowitz (1984, 111-123), discussing the network of triangles in the play, suggests that the two heroines, Andromache and Hermione, seem to be ideal opposites and represent different stages of woman's life.
[269] Hall (2010, 254).
[270] Morwood (2002, 25).

τευχέων χερὶ σπείρουσαν Ἀχελῴου δρόσον,

γνῶναί θ' ἵν' εἶ γῆς.

But if, after all, some god or mortal should decide to save you,

you must abandon the pride of your former wealth,

and cower abjectly and fall at my knees,

and sweep my house, sprinkling Achelous-water

with your hand from golden jars,

and recognize where you are in the world.

(*Andromache*, 163-168)

This is the moment when Hermione ironically expresses a sadistic attitude against a helpless victim, ignoring the fact that Andromache embraces, as a supplicant, the statue of the goddess Thetis. (*πρὸς τόδ' ἄγαλμα θεᾶς ἱκέτις περὶ χεῖρε βαλοῦσα*, *Andromache* 115). Threatening to make her sweep the house with her hands, Hermione forces the Trojan princess to fall to a status of endless prostration. The Achelous–water in the golden jars becomes a kind of punishment, which pointedly recalls the familiar motif of the Danaids' mythical torture of transporting water in leaky jars. Hermione declares that 'the house of Nereid will profit nothing' by Andromache's supplications (*κοὐδέν σ' ὀνήσει δῶμα Νηρῇδος τόδε, Andromache* 161) but to her sacrilegious threats to burn her within the holy precinct, Andromache responds that 'the gods will be witnesses' (*θεοὶ γὰρ εἴσονται τάδε, Andromache* 258). The skilful dramatic effect of the

anthropomorphic 'all seeing gods' is repeated, literally or symbolically, and Thetis' statue, with its silent ambiguous gaze, reinforces feelings of uncertainty.

The justice of Thetis is foregrounded but is not revealed. Her silent *agalma* (statue) raises speculation about her divine will and her final outrage at the dispute between the two bedfellows of Neoptolemus. It is an anthropomorphic soulless statue of a woman and mother that receives the gushing tears of Andromache, probably creating, in the audience's vivid imagination, a symbolic image of an islet surrounded by tears. Even though there is no explicit evidence or references, it could be an attractive suggestion that Andromache's desperate laments seem to evoke memories in the spectators of Priam's pleading and tears for Hector's corpse in *Iliad*.[271] Both the father and the legitimate wife of the Trojan hero beg for pity, humanity and morality to the son and his divine mother respectively. Their emotional state crosses the boundaries between generations, mortals and immortals, allies and enemies and they finally achieve their goals under the most difficult conditions. Tears, dust, water, and fire create a background of scenic motifs that contribute to and promote the crisis before the final restoration and harmony.

The effective image of fire burning the sanctuary of the sea-goddess Thetis, as a result of Hermione's decision to 'bring fire against' Andromache (*πῦρ σοι προσοίσω*, Andromache 257), in correlation with the 'water-punishment' as it is mentioned above, is not only closely associated with the catastrophic dynamic of fire and water as basic elements in Presocratic physics, but also reflects, challengingly, the Greek's fleet arrival at Ilium and the destruction of the lofty city and its holy shrines 'with spear and fire' (*δορὶ καὶ πυρὶ*, *Andromache* 105-106). Hermione's threat of fire is also reminiscent of

[271] Homer, *Il.* 24.

the horrendous catastrophe of the victorious Greek army, which is described in Athena's speech in the prologue of Euripides' *Trojan Women*:

> *καὶ Ζεὺς μὲν ὄμβρον καὶ χάλαζαν ἄσπετον*
>
> *πέμψει, δνοφώδη τ' αἰθέρος φυσήματα:*
>
> *ἐμοὶ δὲ δώσειν φησὶ πῦρ κεραύνιον,*
>
> *βάλλειν Ἀχαιοὺς ναῦς τε πιμπράναι πυρί.*
>
> *σὺ δ' αὖ, τὸ σόν, παράσχες Αἴγαιον πόρον*
>
> *τρικυμίαις βρέμοντα καὶ δίναις ἁλός,*
>
> *πλῆσον δὲ νεκρῶν κοῖλον Εὐβοίας μυχόν,*
>
> On them will Zeus also send his rain and fearful hail, and inky tempests from the sky; and he promises to grant me his thunderbolts to hurl on the Achaeans and fire their ships. And you, for your part, make the Aegean strait roar with mighty billows and whirlpools, and fill Euboea's hollow bay with corpses.
>
> (Euripides' *Trojan Women*, 78-84)

Athena expresses Zeus' desire for revenge against the fleet of the Achaeans, creating a milieu of thunders-bolts, fire and turbulent waters capable of destroying the wooden ships and causing death, making their return journey a funeral procession, and the sea a locus of death. In Euripides' *Andromache*, Hermione's threat is motivated by pettiness and encapsulates feelings of fear and betrayal. Her arrogant and sacrilegious

wrathful desire to burn and cause 'torments of terrible wounds' (*καὶ χρωτὶ δεινῶν τραυμάτων* ἀλγηδόνας, *Andromache* 259) to her victim at the holy altar of Thetis not only produces an analogous poetic image of a fiery catastrophe but, simultaneously, incurs divine indignation and hostility. Her evanescent power and the impulsive anger of her youth reduce her, later in the play, to abandonment and desperation. Deserted by her father, distressed, and worried about her future, Hermione longs for death. In this desperate situation, sea and fire again create the dramatic tableau of her escape and protection. She wishes 'the beloved fiery flames' (*ποῦ μοι πυρὸς φίλα φλόξ, Andromache* 847) to surround her. Her previous aphorisms to the supplicant Andromache are now transformed into pleas for flight and death:[272]

ποῦ δ' ἐκ πέτρας ἀερθῶ,

ἢ κατὰ πόντον ἢ καθ' ὕλαν ὀρέων,

ἵνα θανοῦσα νερτέροισιν μέλω;

Where might I leap from a rock,

either into the sea or into a mountain forest

so that I may die and belong to those below?

(*Andromache* 848-50)

The invisible 'forests' of the sea and mountains with their intricate forking paths become the ideal landscape to hide her ruinous recklessness from the eyes of all. Her bridal house evokes feelings of anxiety and danger, and there is no shelter in the land of

[272] The image recalls the story of Sappho's love for Phaon, a boatman of Lesbos, her leap from the Leucadian rock and her drowning into the sea as a consequence of his rejection.

Phthia to protect her precarious position. She wonders if Thetis or Andromache could be her saviours, defending her from Neoptolemus' anger:

τίνος ἀγαλμάτων ἱκέτις ὁρμαθῶ;

ἢ δούλα δούλας γόνασι προσπέσω;

Which god's statue shall I run to as supplicant?

Or shall I fall as a slave at the knees of my slave?

(*Andromache* 859-60)

Hermione's rhetorical questions reveal her desperate situation, but nobody is there to answer or to defend her. Menelaus and Andromache have just left and Thetis' statue remains silent gazing inexpressibly at the misfortunes afflicting the mundane life of humanity. The liminal status of Hermione is expressed effectively with her reference to the seashore:

ἔλιπες ἔλιπες, ὦ πάτερ, ἐπακτίαν

[ὡσεὶ] μονάδ' ἔρημον οὖσαν ἐνάλου κώπας.

You abandoned me, father, you abandoned me

alone on the shore without a ship in which to put to sea.

(*Andromache*, 854-5)

The shore acquires the characteristics of an interstitial zone between reality and illusion and an escape-point from the visible, desperate present to an invisible, unpredictable future. Hermione is abandoned, alone, by her father like a helpless child near the sea, without wings to fly and without a ship to depart. Her wishes for a transfiguration into a bird remain unfulfilled, and a sea journey like that of the mythical Argo will never start in order to transport her loneliness to a remote destination:

Φθιάδος ἐκ γᾶς

κυανόπτερος ὄρνις ἀρθείην,

πευκᾶεν σκάφος ᾇ διὰ κυανέ-

ας ἐπέρασεν ἀκτάς,

πρωτόπλοος πλάτα.

O that I were a dark-winged bird out from the land of Phthia,

where the pine-wood vessel passed between the dark cliffs,

the first ship of all.

(*Andromache*, 861-865)

Nevertheless, when the son of Agamemnon appears, she finds a harbour like a sailor in the storm (*ὦ ναυτίλοισι χείματος λιμὴν φανεὶς/ Ἀγαμέμνονος παῖ, Andromache* 891-2). In the same way, the rescuer Peleus becomes for Andromache 'the shelter of a harbour in the fury of the storm' (*χείματος γὰρ ἀγρίου/ τυχοῦσα λιμένας ἦλθες εἰς εὐηνέμους, Andromache* 748-9) despite his delayed arrival.

Andromache and Hermione seem to find their own *soteria* through the assistance of mortals but in moments of desperation they both seek a divine or metaphysical assistance. Andromache's invitations to the ancestral figure of Neoptolemus' family, the old Peleus, are not responded to. When she has taken refuge at the shrine of Thetis, her pleas for protection establish her desire to make contact with the divine world that is actualized and made present in Thetis' statue. As Vernant points out, although the representation of the divine makes available a bridge by which mortals can reach the divine, at the same time it marks the distance from the human world, emphasizing the 'alien quality' of the divine.[273] But although Thetis' statue remains silent throughout Andromache's appeals for help – and Hermione's provocative statements regarding the goddesses' unwillingness to help – thereby justifying Vernant's significant observation, her divine appearance as a character at the end of the play reduces the humans' despair and pain, promising good fortune. Therefore, although the healing power of redemptive intervention in desperate situations is well documented between mortals during the play, it is the final arrival of Thetis that restores the balance and leads the story to a consoling end, underscoring the human necessity to explore, via a metaphysical, theological or philosophical route, the mystery of life and death.

Although the abandonment of Peleus' marital bed by Thetis illustrates the 'weakness' in any attempt by a god to be part of the human world, her final presence raises the possibility that humans could be awarded a divine status, but only under certain circumstances. Peleus was granted the special honour of an exceptional marriage but they lived 'apart from humans and shunned the throng' (*ἵν' ἡ θαλασσία/ Πηλεῖ*

[273] Vernant (1991, 153). We must also bear in mind that the chorus of the play recognizes the 'alien quality' of Andromache as a slave in foreign land (*γνῶθι δ' οὖσ' ἐπὶ ξέναις/ δμωὶς ἐπ' ἀλλοτρίας, Andromache* 136-7). At this moment of self-identification, the women of Phthia recognise the foreign status of Andromache as a significant reason to obey the orders of the Greek legitimate wife of Neoptolemus.

ξυνώκει χωρὶς ἀνθρώπων Θέτις/ φεύγουσ' ὅμιλον, Andromache 17-19). Thetis, very soon, and after the birth of Achilles, deserts her 'secret' marriage.[274] The anthropomorphized queen and goddess is replaced by a shrine to her *nympheumata* (*Andromache*, 43, 161) and a statue as a visible *mimesis* of her absent physical appearance (*Andromache* 246, 260). The bride's procession, the wedding feast in the presence of the assembled gods, and an artistic representation of the sea as Thetis' origin and destination, were probably the sculpted images on the 'monument devoted to the Nereid's marriage' (*ἑρμήνευμα Νηρῇδος γάμων, Andromache* 46).

Thetis is always present. Not only is her sanctuary the constant visual focus of the audience, mentioned many times by the characters of the play, but her role as the mother of Achilles and wife of Peleus, her silences and actions, mythical or dramatic, determine the development of the plot. But first and foremost is her final response to Peleus' invocation before he collapses, feeling utterly destroyed (*πανώλεθρόν μ' ὄψεαι πίτνοντα, Andromache* 1225) by the loss of his beloved Neoptolemus. She promises protection and prosperity for Andromache and her child, the sole survivor of the house of Aeacus, and makes her devoted husband Peleus 'an immortal and imperishable god' (*ἀθάνατον ἄφθιτόν τε ποιήσω θεόν, Andromache* 1256) with whom she finally lives in divine connubial bliss in return for a life lived in isolation and seclusion.

Despite being a goddess, having suffered the death of her own child, Thetis' appearance offers a more consoling destiny for those who have suffered. Her return reflects the hope that the distance between human and divine may be eliminated. Achilles, the son of a goddess and a mortal, through his heroic life and his afterlife on

[274] Hes. Fr.300, Merkelback-West; S.fr.151; Ap. Rhod. 4.875ff; Apollod. 3.3.6 as cited in Lloyd (1994, 174).

the island of Leuke, depicts the struggle of a man to prevail over life's obstacles and to fulfill, as a hero, the potential of his emergent divine nature.

3.2.1.2 Transportations and Harbours

Although Euripides' *Andromache* is not identified as a 'travel tragedy', its broader dramatic background is signified by journeys, which range across space and time.[275] The mythical routes become the powerful engines that propel the peregrinations of gods, heroes, and mortals, either within the limits of the geographical world of the play or extending beyond them. Through the pictorial and verbal narratives, the audience's imagination recreates and explores spectacular marches, pious journeys that lead to death, and celebratory transitions into immortality. The tragic characters of the play, crossing the boundaries of their familiar land and life, experience a prolonged agony in the face of the potentialities of the future. Both mortals and immortals struggle for emotional reunions, evanescent solutions, and salvation despite the temporal misfortunes and the illusory perspectives of their destiny.

After the intervention of Peleus that saves Andromache and her child, the chorus of the women of Phthia sings an encomiastic ode recounting his heroic adventures. Their references to the power of time underscore not only its possible and contradictory dynamics that 'diminish what noble men leave' (*οὗτοι λείψανα τῶν ἀγαθῶν/ ἀνδρῶν ἀφαιρεῖται χρόνος, Andromache* 774-5) and force the prosperity of a disreputable victory to 'wither away' (*ἐν δὲ χρόνῳ τελέθει, Andromache* 783), but which also underscore its ability to connect the idealized mythological past with the dramatic

[275] The term is used by Edith Hall (2013) to describe the crucial presence of the sea and the experience of travel throughout her book *Adventures with Iphigenia in Tauris.* The travel-theme is also connected with the 'escape-tragedies' where the flight is usually portrayed via the sea.

present of the play. Euripides allows the legendary couple of the mortal Peleus and the sea goddess Thetis to mount the theatrical stage; in manifold ways this spectacle recreates, visually, their eternal union albeit with regard to their differences in origin and status.

Illustrating a web of transportations in Euripides' *Andromache*, the image of the sea marks, through multiple interpretations, a crucial dramatic field of expeditions, expectations, and memory. The exploits of Peleus as an Argonaut to 'the famous expedition and the crossing of the inhospitable waters of the seagirt Symplegades' (*καὶ ἐπ' Ἀργῴου δορὸς ἄξενον ὑγρὰν/ ἐκπερᾶσαι ποντιᾶν Ξυμπληγάδων/ κλεινὰν ἐπὶ ναυστολίαν, Andromache* 794-6) reveal his ability to eliminate, through heroism, the tragic disparity between mortality and divinity. The passage between the Clashing Rocks implies a pathway to glory and fame, illustrating the ability of a mortal to survive and sail into a dangerous and inhospitable sea. The journey of Peleus from Thessaly to an alien and remote region of the Black Sea could be inversely associated with the arrival of Thetis from the depths of the sea to the mainland of Phthia. Thetis' unwillingness to live far away from her aqueous milieu leads in the end to the strangeness of her marriage to Peleus. Thetis abandons her husband. Her presence in the palace of Peleus, as a figure who exists and is queen of Thessaly, yet is almost invisible to the humans (*Andromache*, 18-19), is replaced by a visible sanctuary of commemoration, where her silent soulless statue is installed (*Andromache*, 46). She returns glorious and divine to the underwater palace of her father in the same way as Peleus returned to Europe, victorious and heroic, after the Argonautic expedition to the Black Sea (*κοινὰν τὰν εὔκλειαν ἔχοντ'/ Εὐρώπαν ἀφικέσθαι, Andromache* 800-801).

After her departure, Thetis' idealized figure is represented through Thetideion; a sanctuary of commemoration and sacred devotion. The anthropomorphized Nereid as

honoured divinity extends, literally and metaphorically, the dynamic image of the sea to an inland territory, creating a space of memory. This probably reflects through visual artistic representations not only the celebration of her marriage with Peleus (*Andromache*, 20) but also her aquatic origin. Furthermore, her altar as space of supplication acquires symbolically, during the play, the characteristic of an island. Andromache in a moment of utter desperation asks her child to supplicate Menelaus:

λίσσου, γούνασι δεσπότου

χρίμπτων, ὦ τέκνον.

Approach your master's knees

And implore him, my child

(*Andromache*, 529-530)

Menelaus, stating his reluctance to help them, compares himself to a rock or an implacable wave of the sea:

τί με προσπίτνεις, ἁλίαν πέτραν

ἢ κῦμα λιταῖς ὡς ἱκετεύων;

Why do you fall at my knees? You might as

well beseech a rock of the sea or a wave with your prayers.

(*Andromache* 537-538)

But Menelaus neither plays the role of the saviour nor has the power to control the sea. He is a cowardly sailor (*ναύτην κακόν*, *Andromache* 457), unable to help, later in the play, even his own daughter Hermione, abandoning her unprotected and desperate at the seashore without a ship to embark and any hope of escape (*Andromache* 854-5). Although Andromache and her son are portrayed as helplessly shipwrecked in a turbulent sea, the arrival of Peleus in the nick of the time saves them. The altar of the goddess Thetis symbolically preserves the characteristics of a harbour where the Trojan princess Andromache finds refuge, albeit temporarily, until the entrance of Peleus. The old king becomes the favourable wind which fills Andromache's sails, propelling her to salvation (*πρῶτον μὲν οὖν κατ' οὖρον ὥσπερ ἱστίοις/ ἐμπνεύσομαι τῇδ', Andromache* 554-5), on to another sheltered harbour after her meeting with the fury of the storm (*Andromache*, 747-9).

In Euripides' *Andromache*, the image of the seashore illustrates a border-zone, which distinguishes, through a broader dramatic and symbolic field, the two different experiences of the bride. First, the bride's expectations concerns her new status as a married woman before her arrival in the new land, and second an unfortunate situation that leads the bride, after a period of time, to depart from her marital palace. This liminal space of the seashore, as we have already mentioned in Chapter Two, can be read as a symbol of transition, a point of integration or of separation. Both the sea-born Thetis and Andromache follow the route from their birthplace to the royal hearths of Phthia and Troy respectively, but the trajectories of their lives, as far as their feelings are concerned, are pointedly opposed. The journey of the brides via the sea to the nuptial ceremonies, enforced or desired, passes over a coast that will later be the point of their future departure. Within a short period of time the brides will follow the same path but this time conversely. They leave the royal chambers to travel to the seashore.

Their departure marks for Andromache a voyage that dooms her to a wretched life of losses, enslavement, and a new marriage; and for Thetis a release and return to the sea.

Thetis' inability, as a goddess, to be part of the world and suffering of humans, and the loss of her mortal child, induce her to reclaim her divine power in order to be the saviour of her own family, rewarding both her husband Peleus and her child Achilles with eternal bliss. Thetis transports her beloved male figures into the proximity of her physical environment and makes them part of it. Her luminous appearance at the end of the play honours Peleus' affection and loyalty, offering him a consoling destiny and a protective divine harbour, which will be able to care for him despite the pains of his mortality. She promises to her mortal family joyful reunions and endless happiness:

κἄπειτα Νηρέως ἐν δόμοις ἐμοῦ μέτα

τὸ λοιπὸν ἤδη θεὸς συνοικήσεις θεᾷ:

ἔνθεν κομίζων ξηρὸν ἐκ πόντου πόδα

τὸν φίλτατον σοὶ παῖδ' ἐμοί τ' Ἀχιλλέα

ὄψῃ δόμους ναίοντα νησιωτικοὺς

Λευκὴν κατ' ἀκτὴν ἐντὸς ἀξένου πόρου.

> Thereafter, you will live with me forever, god with goddess, in the house of Nereus. From there, you will leave the sea dry-shod and see Achilles, your dear son and mine, living in his island home on the White Shore in the inhospitable sea.

(*Andromache,* 1257-1262)

The island of Leuke, as a remote region located in the northern Euxine, becomes the mythical 'harbour' for Achilles' vulnerable mortality and his last destination after a life of wandering, fights, and heroism.[276]

3.2.1.3 The Islander Achilles

One of the most remarkable 'absent' heroes in extant Greek tragedy is Achilles.[277] The son of Peleus and the sea goddess Thetis is an archetypal intermediate figure oscillating between life and death; a hero of wrath, glory, and grief. Achilles' ambiguous dramatic presence as an alleged bridegroom, when Agamemnon used his name to lure Iphigenia in Euripides' *Iphigenia in Aulis*, and his abhorrent desire for the sacrifice of Polyxena as an honorable gift (*γέρας*) of the Greek army to flatter his vanity in Euripides' *Hecuba,* creates an image of a continuously betrayed, insulted, but also vainglorious character. Achilles has been seen as an important figure whose dilemmas and decisions, intentional or involuntary, determine the evolution of the Trojan expedition and the return of the victorious Greek fleet to their homeland, through the mythological traditions and their dramatization by the tragedians.

This section will explore some of the intricate relationships between Achilles and the aquatic scenes of rivers and the sea, relationships which are underlined successfully in Euripides' *Andromache*. Escaping from his mortality, Achilles' afterlife status reveals not a world of heroic achievements and rivalries, but a remote landscape

[276] Achilles' Pontic afterlife, along with those of Helen and Iphigenia, were discussed by Froma Zeitlin at the conference on an ancient Greek drama at the Black Sea held at King's College London in July 2014. Her study will be published in the proceedings of the conference, edited by David Braund, Edith Hall, and Rosie Wyles, to be published by Cambridge University Press.

[277] Michelakis (2002) presents an insightful analytical approach of the representation of Achilles 'as a model and as a problem' through his presence and absence in the tragedy of fifth-century Athens. In the extant plays Achilles is dealt with or referred to in Sophocles' *Ajax* and *Philoctetes*, and Euripides' *Andromache*, *Electra, Hecuba,* and *Iphigenia in Aulis*.

of eternity and sanctity. The island of Leuke in the Black Sea becomes the hospitable land for the son of the sea goddess Thetis; a space surrounded by the sea, consolation and mystery.

Achilles' connection with the sea is often portrayed in literary sources which deal with the mythological traditions of his life and become a source of inspiration for the tragedians. The significance of Achilles' family background is mentioned by him in *Iphigenia at Aulis*, the only fully preserved tragedy in which he appears as a dramatic persona on stage. Achilles, invoking his grandfather Nereus as witness, swears an oath to Clytemnestra in order to protect her daughter Iphigenia and simultaneously to restore his abused name.[278] This self-identification of Achilles, as descendant of Nereus, the eldest son of Pontos and Gaia, is an important clue to understanding the close relationship with his mother and her numinous presence in his life, provides an aura of maternal protection from his birth until his afterlife transition into eternity.

The life and death of Achilles is haunted by the anguish and unsuccessful attempts of the Nereid Thetis to immortalize him after his birth.[279] There are two prominent stories that describe the desire of Thetis to be the saviour of her own child during his infancy, before he faces the dangers and the sufferings of mortality. In one tradition she immerses him into the waters of the river Styx.[280] The stream's waters grant miraculous powers of invulnerability although they are closely connected with the realm of underworld. The boundaries between life, death, and immortality are

[278] 'By Nereus, who begot my mother Thetis, in his home amid the flowing waves, [950] never shall king Agamemnon touch your daughter. No! Not even to the laying of a finger-tip upon her robe'. (*μὰ τὸν δι' ὑγρῶν κυμάτων τεθραμμένον/Νηρέα, φυτουργὸν Θέτιδος ἥ μ' ἐγείνατο,/ οὐχ ἅψεται σῆς θυγατρὸς Ἀγαμέμνων ἄναξ,/ οὐδ' εἰς ἄκραν χεῖρ', ὥστε προσβαλεῖν πέπλοις,* Euripides' *IA*, 948-951).

[279] The theme of exposure to death is prominent in ancient Greek tragedy. Mothers appear to decide on the salvation of their children. They use the power of persuasion, their status, or acts of deception in order to achieve their goals, as the utter expression of their maternal selfless love. In Euripides' *Andromache*, Thetis and Andromache choose to save their offspring in the face of the prophecies of oracles, threats, and dilemmas.

[280] Burgess (1960, 9) supports the view that the dipping into the river Styx is not attested in literature until Statius in the late first century CE and specifically in the *Achilleid* (1.133-4, 268, 270, 480-481).

ambiguous in the ancient Greek world and are often conflated, with rituals inviting diverse dimensions and interpretations. The bath of Achilles by his mother in the river of Hate peculiarly illustrates one of the most poetic images of maternal love and affection.[281] The cyclical form of the river Styx as a branch of Oceanus, flowing from its tenth source, surrounds the island of the 'unseen' Hades corralling the souls of mortals.[282] However it could be suggested that, for Achilles, its waters have the dynamic quality of remedy (*φάρμακον*) able to abate the mortal's suffering through Thetis' utter desire to prevent his death.[283]

The relation between Achilles and rivers is prominent in many epic narratives and legends concerning his heroic achievements. The river Scamander is not mentioned in Euripides' *Andromache*, but its significant presence in Homer's *Iliad* reveal images of danger, suffering and abhorrent deaths. The personified Scamander becomes a deep eddying river, which almost takes his life after Achilles insults him.[284] Achilles' immersion in the deep water of Trojan stream and its dynamic transformation from river to fire illustrate a remarkable thematic connection with the failed attempts of the sea goddess Thetis to save her mortal son.

Furthermore, the image of the Trojan river Scamander in Homer's *Iliad*, which drives upon Achilles a great black wall of water as a result of Achilles damming up the river by piling dead bodies into its stream, reflects the image of the hero on the island of Leuke where six rivers flow with the rushing force of the waters into the Black Sea.[285]

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[281] The name of the river Styx comes from the Greek verb *στυγῶ*, which means hate, abhor, or detest.
[282] Hesiod's *Theogony* 789. The motif of the inclosing captive souls is mentioned also in Virgil, *Aeneid* vi 439 and *Georgics* iv 480. Styx is described in Plato (*Republic*, 387c.) as a 'flood of deadly hate'.
[283] The Greek word *φάρμακον* means both remedy and poison. The image of Achilles' dipping in Styx by his mother could, symbolically, reflect another meaning of the word *φάρμακος,* which referred to a sacrificial ritual as a kind of catharsis. For the disease and medicine in Attic tragedy see Bakonikola (2004, 65-72).
[284] Homer *Iliad*, 21.213-21.382.
[285] In the north six rivers flow into the Black Sea: the Istros, the Tyras, the Borysthenes, the Tanais, and two rivers of the name Hypanis. As West (2003, 155-156) argues, 'the accumulation of their waters

The hero is unable to diminish the strength of the current and the power of the natural world. In the *Iliad,* he pleads for help from the gods and Hephaestus throws fire on the river.[286] From this epic image another reflection could arise, of fire not only as a means of destruction but also as a sign for *soteria*. As an immortal and legendary figure, Achilles, on Leuke, is transformed into a bright sign of salvation as the only inhabitant of the island.[287] He is not anymore the arrogant Iliadic hero fighting against nature, but he symbolically becomes a fiery sign (*sema*), which protects the sailors from the inhospitable waters of the Black Sea in the same way as Peleus and Thetis become harbours of salvation for the unprotected Andromache.[288] Even though Euripides in *Hecuba* chooses to metaphysically transform the Trojan queen and mother of Achilles' worst enemy into a *sema* (*Hecuba*, 1273), in *Andromache* the legends of Achilles' appearance on Leuke as a ghost-saviour is not adopted and the son of Thetis remains a hero.[289]

Apollonius Rhodius in his *Argonautica* describes another story that concerns Thetis' attempt to determine the destiny of Achilles by burning off his mortal half, anointing him with ambrosia during the day and placing him upon a fire during the night. Peleus misinterprets her purpose: his fear and his desperate cries, when he sees his infant in the flames, interrupt the ritual procedure and Thetis' attempt fails.[290] However, fire acquires its catastrophic dynamic in the epic cyclic *Aethiopis*, according

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largely accounts for its complicated currents. The lack of any tide to carry away the deposits of the great rivers increases the difficulty of approaching the shoreline; there are marshy, foggy tracts at their mouths, and on the west and north-west coasts the boundary between sea and land is often rather ill-defined and shifting'.

[286] Nethercut (1976, 1-18) mentions the importance of Achilles' race with the river Scamander in Homer's *Iliad.*

[287] For the navigation, the lack of other islands in the vast region of the Black Sea would allow us to justify Leuke as a *sema* that helps the sailors to confront the difficult sailing conditions.

[288] The island of Leuke is designated in Pindar (*Nemean,* 4.49f) as the 'radiant island' of Achilles in the Euxine Sea.

[289] Arrian in *Periplous Ponti Euxini* (21-23) refers to legends about Achilles' appearance to the sailors who approach the island of Leuke.

[290] For the failed attempt of Achilles' immersion in fire and Peleus' 'fatal' intervention see Appolonius Rhodius, *Argonautica*, (4.869-884).

to Arctinus of Miletus in the summary of Proclus.[291] When the lifeless body of Achilles was placed upon his funeral pyre, Thetis' intervention prevented the flames of oblivion from burning his corpse. She snatches her son and transports him to the White Island. For the infant Achilles, the fire is portrayed as offering a potential protective power of immortality but during his adulthood it is associated with his adventures as a fierce spirit of war, death, and heroism. Placed upon his funeral pyre, after his death, Achilles is threatened by the flames with annihilation. His imminent cremation, transforming his corpse into ashes, gives a final bright reflection of mortals' eschatological destination.

The contradictory elements of water and fire; the mysterious and obscure underwater paths associated with the brightness of the sun-like fiery power, create a symbolic image of a model hero who stretches between the challenges of life and death. Both fire and sea could be manic forces whose destructive consequences could be associated not only with the heroic identity of Achilles but also could reveal his divine dynamic.

In ancient Greek tragedy, the ambiguous nature of the human psyche, struggles to escape in vain from its mortal boundaries, and the unpredictable desires of the divine lead the play to 'happy' or 'unhappy' endings. Within these determined limits of the tragic universe, gods and heroes transform their identities, deceiving their 'victims' in order to destroy or save them, and in many cases in order to escape from them. In Ovid's epic poem *Metamorphoses*, in the cave of the Nereid Thetis, Peleus willed by his desire to capture her, evokes a relentless struggle in which Thetis, chameleon-like, is transformed into different types of elements, shapes and figures.[292] Fire again plays a significant role. Thetis' identification with fire, merging with her aquatic origin,

[291] *Aethiopis* in West, M. L. (2003, 108-117). *Greek epic fragments from the seventh to the fifth centuries BC* (Vol. 497). Loeb Classical Library.
[292] Ovid, *Metamorphoses* (11.229).

illustrates her dynamic nature and her persistent desire to achieve her goals. The sea goddess' anthropomorphised appearance, in Euripides' *Andromache,* inculcates her maternal spirit within the limits of tragic mortality by giving a perspective of hope and consolation. Although Euripides does not refer to the mythical metamorphosis of Thetis, the last lines of the chorus concern the 'many forms of the miraculous' (*πολλαὶ μορφαὶ τῶν δαιμονίων, Andromache* 1284), which enhance the possibility that he alludes to Thetis' various transformations.

Travelling from an uncharted world into the theatrical stage, Thetis' arrival as messenger of the 'elsewhere' reminds the audience of the existence of an unexplored and inexplicable place within the geographical limits of the known world or beyond them.[293] The mythical caves of Pelion the island of Skyros and remote island of Leuke are spaces that illustrate another dramatic illustration of the 'elsewhere' as spaces of reunion, isolation, and refuge.

The caves of Pelion are the location of the mythical wrestling match between Peleus and Thetis. The sea deity struggling to avoid the erotic union with Peleus transformed her identity to a variety of shapes including those of beast, fire, and water until Peleus finally subdued her, but her transformations illustrate the harrowing passage to maternity and pains of mortality.[294] The untamed maiden Thetis provides another striking example of the motif of marriage as a yoke. Her abduction and the taming of her primitive instincts may illustrate her symbolic transformation into a figure of protection and salvation.[295] When Achilles was born, he was reared by Chiron and his wife on Mount Pelion, a hook-like and densely forested peninsula between the

[293] Appleton, 1920 (13) identifies the role of the *deus ex machina* in Euripides as a messenger.
[294] Herodotus (7.191), Sophocles (fr.150, 618R). For the literary sources and aspects of the mythological tradition concerning the relationship between Peleus and Thetis that may influence Euripides see also Belfiore (2000, 94-97).
[295] For the role of Thetis as an untamed maiden see Hopman (2012, 161-163). For the local traditions connected with her cult at the coasts of Magnesia see Herodotus (7.188-192).

Pagasetic Gulf and the Aegean Sea.[296] The Cape of Sepias and its caves, as a characteristic feature of coastal landscape, become an intermediate zone between civilization and nature, visions of myth and figures of mortality, isolation and initiation. Caves in folk tales offer an aura of mystery as boundaries that lead to an alien and unknown world.[297]

The Cape of Sepias, in Euripides' *Andromache,* functions as the suitable landscape for the joyful reunion of his parents and the initial point of Peleus' journey to the palace of Nereus and the island of Leuke. Thetis asks Peleus to return to the grottoes of their first encounter, waiting for the chorus of fifty nymphs to escort him on his celebratory journey to immortality:

ἐλθὼν παλαιᾶς χοιράδος κοῖλον μυχὸν

Σηπιάδος ἵζου: μίμνε δ', ἔστ' ἂν ἐξ ἁλὸς

λαβοῦσα πεντήκοντα Νηρήδων χορὸν

ἔλθω κομιστήν σου

Then go and sit in a hollow cave on Sepias' ancient reef,

and wait until I bring from the sea a chorus of fifty nymphs

to escort you

(*Andromache* 1265-1268)

[296] Proclus' *Chrestomathia* (103-105).
[297] For the caves in the ancient Greek world as a symbolic beyond see Buxton (2004, 104-108).

Their noble marriage is reaffirmed outside the norms of the civilized world as a secret liaison in a remote and invisible location, apart from humans and the mighty gods. The cave shelters the most crucial moments of their shared life: Thetis' 'taming' to mortality and Peleus' deification. The caves of Pelion symbolize, for both of them, a meeting point between their two distinct worlds, and are chosen again intentionally by Thetis as an entrance for their new common departure to elsewhere; the sea and the island Leuke.

Pelion is also the point of Achilles' departure to a life of wandering. As a mythical landscape consisting of sea caves, Pelion is an appropriate 'space for outsiders'.[298] Exposed to nature, far away from the palace of his father, and isolated as hero, Achilles literally and symbolically inhabits the liminal regions of the world, almost as an 'outsider'. After his first unsuccessful attempt to sack Troy, mistaking Mysia for Ilion, and experiencing a shipwreck during his return voyage, he embarks at Skyros where he encounters Deidamia. As a result of their erotic union, Neoptolemos is born.

Skyros, the birthplace of Neoptolemos, is an island in the southernmost part of the archipelago of the Sporades in the Aegean Sea. Its strategic location was important in the fifth century BC and when the Athenian statesman Cimon defeated the original inhabitants of the island in 476, Skyros became part of the Athenian Empire.[299] In Euripides' *Andromache* Skyros is mentioned just once by the Trojan Princess. When Andromache justifies why Neoptolemos loathes Hermione, she says:

ἡ Λάκαινα μὲν πόλις

μέγ' ἐστί, τὴν δὲ Σκῦρον οὐδαμοῦ τίθης

[298] Caves are identified as 'spaces for outsiders'. Also see Buxton (2004, 104-108).
[299] Thucydides (1.88).

You make out Sparta

to be great and Skyros to be nothing

(*Andromache* 209-210)

This censure reflects, as an especially revealing example, the distance between spouses with different origins or cultures in ancient Greek tragedy. The geography of the play features a polarization that could establish a mirror image, illustrating the phenomenon of discrimination, prejudice, social and class hatred between Greek *polis* of the mainland and islands. Hermione is a 'rich amongst the poor' and according to Andromache she 'set Menelaus above Achilles' (*πλουτεῖς δ' ἐν οὐ πλουτοῦσι: Μενέλεως δέ σοι/ μείζων Ἀχιλλέως, Andromache* 211-212). Although the ancient Greeks' acclaimed mariners and the sea played a pivotal role in their lives and its history as a mean of extensive trade routes, military campaigns, and colonization, islands were considered as poorer regions in resources and to be an islander was not always to have positive connotations.[300]

Skyros is also connected with stories concerning Achilles' transvestism as a plan, organized by his mother in order to avoid his fatal journey to Troy, or as a shelter chosen by Peleus as a hiding place.[301] These traditions not only indicate a portrayal that contrasts with Achilles' masculine heroic prototype, but also amplifies his characterization as an 'absent hero'. Nevertheless in Euripides' *Andromache* his name is continuously referred to as a significant metonymy for Neoptolemos' identification.

[300] Stevens (1971, 90) supports that to be islander in ancient Greece means 'a kind of disparagement'. See also Costantakopoulou (2005, 1-34).
[301] Burgess (1960, 15, n.28) discusses the sources that indicate Skyros as Achilles' hiding place and the common theme of Thetis who tries to protect her son from an early death in Troy.

The islander Neoptolemos is the potential saviour whose position and role could be capable of restoring balance and resolving the complexity of the quarrel between Hermione and Andromache. He never appears alive on stage due to his abhorrent murder at the shrine of Apollo at Delphi, which makes impossible his return. Neoptolemos' intervention is replaced by the arrival of his grandmother Thetis as *dea ex machina* who leads the play to a more *apotheotic* restoration.

Throughout the play Neoptolemos is referred to by name just once and by his patronymic thirteen times.[302] His identity is hidden under the soulless shadow of his famous father, but his heroic virtue is revealed with his decision to go to Delphi and the poetic image of his Pyrrhic dance (*Andromache* 1135-1136).[303] I suggest that his anonymity and his nameless presence at the shrine of Apollo are significant reasons for his being doomed to death. Being unable to persuade the Delphians as an anonymous pilgrim propels the fatal plot of his assassination and makes him a victim of a murder that destroys entirely his handsome body (*Andromache* 1155-1156). Thetis is concerned about the burial of Neoptolemos and offers a kind of a consoling restoration after the macabre murder of the 'son of Achilles':

τὸν μὲν θανόντα τόνδ' Ἀχιλλέως γόνον

θάψον πορεύσας Πυθικὴν πρὸς ἑσχάραν,

Δελφοῖς ὄνειδος, ὡς ἀπαγγέλλῃ τάφος

[302] For the function of patronymics in Euripides' *Andromache* see Phillipo (1995, 355-371).
[303] If we accept Knox's idea that in Sophocles' *Philoctetes*, Achilles is 'the measure of Neoptolemos' fall from heroic virtue and the ideal to which he must in the end rise again' (Knox 1964, 124) and the assertion made by King that 'Neoptolemos' fall is the measure of his father's heroic virtue' (King 1987, 67), then we could suggest that in Euripides' *Andromache* Neoptolemos attempts to be heroic and his heroism makes him a tragic hero murdered abhorrently in the temple of Apollo. It is Orestes and the god's will that punish him and his grandmother's will that he is honoured as mortal and not be transformed, as her god-like son is on Leuke, into an immortal.

φόνον βίαιον τῆς Ὀρεστείας χερός

Take the son of Achilles here to the Pythian hearth

and bury him, as a reproach to the Delphians,

so that his tomb will proclaim

the murderous violence of Orestes' hand.

(*Andromache* 1239-1242)

Both Neoptolemos and Achilles sail the Aegean to conquer Troy. The end of Euripides' *Andromache* determines the geographical regions after their death. The tomb of the islander Neoptolemos will be a space of commemoration, which portrays the eschatological aspect of mortality, in contrast with his father, whose death represents a transitional state that leads him to Leuke, as an apt geographical space of immortality within the world of mortals.

The legends about Achilles' post mortem existence and cult are intrinsically linked to sanctuaries on the peripheral zone of the ancient Greek world. Achilles is mainly associated with regions that in many cases reflect the political and colonial interest of the Athenian hegemony.[304] Notwithstanding the panhellenic reputation of Achilles, the ancient and later literary sources, as well as the recent discoveries in the

[304] For the cults and sanctuaries of Achilles as a honoured hero throughout the Greek world see Michelakis (2002, 2-32). Specifically for the Athenian interest in the Black Sea see Mattingly (1996) and Tsetskhladze (1998).

broader region of the Taurian Chersonese, reveal his popularity as a cult hero in the Black Sea.[305]

Achilles is incapable of being the 'god in his might' (*θεὸς ἐγὼ πέφηνά σοι μέγιστος, IA* 973-974) who can effect the salvation of Iphigenia at Aulis, and the role of the saviour is played by the goddess Artemis who transports Iphigenia in the land of the Taurians. In Euripides' *Andromache* it is the minor sea goddess Thetis who fulfills the 'vital' function of Achilles' salvation from Hades and grants him the divine characteristic of immortality. The identification of Achilles as Pontarches and Lord of Scythia fulfills his desire, and his god-like image as protector of colonists and traders travelling far away from Greek mainland justifies his 'might' as islander in the remote Black sea.

[305] For the cult of Achilles in the Euxine see Hedreen (1991, 313-330), Hooker (1988), and West (2003, 151-167).

3.3 Euripides' *Iphigenia in Tauris*

3.3.1 Reflections on the sea. '*Τὸ κλεινὸν ὄνομα τῆς σωτηρίας*' through the nautical imagery in Euripides' *Iphigenia in Tauris.*

In Euripides' *Iphigenia in Tauris* the greatest desire for the Greeks, struggling against the most difficult conditions in order to escape from the adversities that divine powers have imposed upon them, is salvation. In a perceptive study, Burnett has explored how salvation is made a subject central to Euripides' *Iphigenia in Tauris* through the recurrent use of s*oteria* words.[306] Tracing the multiple functions of salvation in the play, her work has undeniably advanced our understanding of web of actions bound up with the hope of rescue. In this first part of this chapter, seeking to explore the frequent use of the notion of *soteria* in this 'adventure tragedy', I shall go a step further, focusing my attention on how the aspect of rescue, via the frequent verbal echoes of 'salvation words', is explicitly and extensively connected, both literally and metaphorically, with the image of the sea. [307]

Iphigenia not only states in her prologue that her propitiatory sacrifice on the coast of Aulis has never happened, but her entrance onto the stage from the doors of the temple of the Taurian Artemis, confirms this as well. The young Argive princess narrowly avoided a 'marriage to death' through the miraculous intervention of the goddess Artemis, who substituted a deer for her.[308] Iphigenia was transported through

[306] Burnett (1971, 47).
[307] As the plot of the play involves dangerous journeys to sacred exotic regions, impending sacrifices, multiple reversals of fortunes, and escape, Euripides' *Iphigenia in Tauris* is, rightly, characterized by G. Murray (1930), as an 'adventure story'. The spatiotemporal adventures of Iphigenia is the main subject of Edith Hall's (2013) influential book about Euripides' 'Black Sea tragedy' and its afterlife from antiquity to the present day.
[308] The concept of 'marriage to death' motif is prominent in ancient Greek tragedy, as it was perceived as a standard threat to young women. In Iphigenia's story, the marriage with Hades is portrayed through the traumatic experience of the mock wedding with Achilles, part of Agamemnon's plan to deceive his daughter (Euripides' *Iphigenia in Aulis*, 461, 946).

the bright air to a rocky, bleak, and bizarre coast of the Black Sea.[309] In this barbaric peninsula, ruled by the king Thoas and inhabited by cowherds and 'purple-fishers', Iphigenia serves Artemis as priestess, taking part in the abominable human sacrifices of outsiders who arrive in the Taurians' country.

This bizarre setting motivates and determines the evolution of the plot. Although the marginal zone of the seashore, caught between the country of the Taurians and the Black Sea, provides a hypothetical escape route via the sea, it also increases the difficulties for salvation because of the extremely hostile attitude of the locals and their rituals. Nevertheless, even though this far-flung Taurian land is evoked as place of isolation, for which the navigation of the Unfriendly Sea and the passage of Symplegades function as natural borders and dangerous passages, the sea simultaneously becomes a synonym for escape and salvation.

In the 1,499 lines of Euripides' *Iphigenia in Tauris*, 'salvation words' appear forty times with no mention of them until Orestes responds to Iphigenia's interrogation about his long voyage to the remote Taurian peninsula. His mission to take the wooden statue (*xoanon*) of Artemis from the bloody temple of Crimean Chersonese, and to bring it to the shores of Attica, threatens his life.[310] His passage through the Clashing Rocks could be a symbolic passage to the Underworld. Orestes and Pylades, as foreigners, are doomed to be sacrificed to Artemis. The two friends are trapped in a barbaric land with no hope of rescue (*σωτηρίας ἄνελπις, I.T.* 487).

[309] The myth of Iphigenia's substitution and transportation from Iphigenia at Aulis had existed in the traditional epic cycle of myths. Proclus' summary for the lost *Cypria* mentions Iphigenia's salvation and journey to the Black Sea (Davies 1989, 32).

[310] Euripides uses the term *xoanon* only once in the play (*I.T.* 1359). The statue as a wooden object is mentioned on eleven occasions (986, 1040, 1165, 1179, 1199, 1291, 1444, 1453, 1477, 1481, 1489). For statues made of wood see Donohue (1988), as cited in Hall (2013, 21-22).

Orestes is a tragic mortal who, subjected to the divine ordeals of his patron god Apollo, struggles to be released from the painful effects of his matricide. His agonizing journeys could be seen as a result of the divine fight between the chthonic Furies and the Olympian gods, a fight whose outcome will also determine his final release from misfortune.[311] Captured in a web of remorse for the atrocious crimes of killing his mother Clytemnestra, Orestes seeks purification. The journey to Tauris, where Greek visitors are sacrificed and Greek women live in captivity is nevertheless, for the Argive Orestes, the pursuit of his own freedom and the passage to escape from past sufferings. But arriving at the edges of the world, he faces the edges of his own life. The moored ship on which Orestes and his best friend Pylades travelled waits for them at the seashore, but the only possible departure from Tauris is, according to the murderous rituals, the one that leads to Hades.

Nevertheless, after their capture by the locals, Orestes and Pylades meet the priestess Iphigenia in front of the temple of the goddess Artemis. The identities of the two siblings are temporarily hidden behind their anonymity. The persistent effort of Iphigenia to learn about her family and the fate of everyone who was involved in her sacrifice at Aulis not only evokes painful memories, but also offers to the plot structure the most appropriate dramatic tool that will lead to a happy ending. The letter, which all these years Iphigenia has longed to be able to send to Argos in order to inform her family of her salvation, has a complex dynamic function and creates the only situation

[311] The trial of Orestes in Aeschylus' *Eumenides*, in which the Furies act as Orestes' accusers and Apollo as defender, becomes, among other things, a debate between the chthonic powers and the new generation of gods. Athena, presiding, assists Orestes and the trial results in an acquittal, giving the Furies a new role as Eumenides.

by which the plot can move forward. The wooden material of the letter plays a significant role as a spring of metaphors and finally as a mean of salvation.[312]

The availability of timber, as the basic construction material for ships, is also the requirement of maritime communication. The forests of Greece, the Black Sea, and Asia Minor were the main resources, which allowed the coastal civilizations to develop naval supremacy and trading expertise.[313] The wood could be metamorphosed into shelters, weapons, oars, musical instruments, vessels, statues (*xoana*) and tablets.[314] The letter (*δέλτος*) was a light wooden plaque containing a layer of wax, which acted as a writing surface, and covered in turn by another plaque attached to the first.[315] Its wooden quality could be interpreted metaphorically as a symbol of power and immortality, transformation of fortune and transportation of hope.[316] Furthermore, it may have recalled to the audience memories of great naval expeditions and carved sacred images, shipwrecked fleets and objects lost in the abysses of the sea. The wooden tablet in Euripides' *Iphigenia in Tauris* provides a lifeline out of a very difficult moment of despair.

During the 'letter scene' the density of the appearance of words that refer to salvation is significant. They appear thirteen times in 183 lines and all references to the letter presuppose a return journey back to Greece for at least one of the two foreign friends. The letter thus has a dual dynamic function. Its content provides information

[312] Aristotle in his *Poetics* (1455a 16-19) was impressed by the twofold recognition scene in Euripides' *Iphigenia in Tauris* The element of surprise through the letter as device of recognition enhances his admiration for the scene. For Aristotle's interest in Euripides' *Iphigenia in Tauris'* recognition scene see Belfiore (1992, 359-77).
[313] Oosthoek (2008).
[314] Taplin (2007, 150) observes that nearly all of the vases give special prominence to one or both of two special objects: the cult image of Artemis and the letter.
[315] Cropp (2000, 214).
[316] According to Apollonius Rhodius, Athena, before the sailing of Argo, fitted the stern with a divine beam made from Dodonian oak (*νηὸς δόρυ, τό ῥ' ἀνὰ μέσσην/ στεῖραν Ἀθηναίη Δωδωνίδος ἥρμοσε φηγοῦ, Argonautica* 4.582-30), which embodied its quality as an emblematic symbol of immortality.

about Iphigenia's salvation after her horrendous slaughter at Aulis and, simultaneously, saves the life of its deliverer. Iphigenia's plan to save one of the two Greeks (in order to convey the letter to her beloved ones) presupposes a reciprocal oath, which will ensure both the successful transportation of the letter and the salvation of its deliverer. When Orestes rejects the offer to be the one who will be saved and convinces his co-voyager to be saved instead, Pylades expresses his concerns about the dangers of the stormy sea and the possibility of a voyage without return (*ἄνοστος εἴην, I.T.* 751).

Having sworn an oath, Pylades has the moral and sacred obligation to transport the letter, but wonders what would happen if the ship were to disappear into the waves of the turbulent sea and the tablet along with it. Thus Pylades, foreshadowing a possible obstacle during his return journey to Greece, introduces a doubt, which will become the engine that generates the recognition between the two siblings.

Iphigenia, raising the possibilities to achieve her goal, reads out to Pylades the message she has written. She ensures that even if the written tablet were to be lost at the sea, her words would be saved so long as Pylades' body survives and arrives in Greece in safety (*ἢν δ' ἐν θαλάσσῃ γράμματ' ἀφανισθῇ τάδε,/ τὸ σῶμα σῴσας τοὺς λόγους σῴσεις ἐμοί, I.T.* 764-765). When Iphigenia announces the secret message of the letter to the foreign strangers, she reveals her identity saying:

> *Ἥ 'ν Αὐλίδι σφαγεῖσ' ἐπιστέλλει τάδε*
>
> *ζῶσ' Ἰφιγένεια, τοῖς ἐκεῖ δ' οὐ ζῶσ' ἔτι*
>
> She who was slain at Aulis sends you these words
> Iphigenia, who lives, though to them no longer living.
>
> (*I.T.* 770-771)

Hence, the dangers of the sea and the fear of an impending shipwreck lead to the revelation of the content of Iphigenia's confidential letter. The sea, albeit indirectly, functions as a crucial factor in the siblings' mutual revelation of their identities, and its unpredictability becomes a dramatic device that sets in motion the mechanisms of their salvation.

The aural similarity of the ancient Greek word *ζῶ* (live) and the word *σώζω* (save) provides a striking paradigm for the way in which the ancient Greeks understood their journey through life. For them, existence was a constant struggle for salvation, and their wanderings through and explorations of the sea exemplified their desire to travel beyond those boundaries normally assigned to mortals by divine and natural powers. The desire to expand upon their life, literally and metaphorically, is always connected with journeys of knowledge, adventures in faraway lands and, of course, the nostalgic yearning for a return to their homeland, safe and victorious, as a reward for their efforts. Euripides' *Iphigenia in Tauris* illustrates this tragic fight of mortal heroes against demons and time. Orestes and Iphigenia, crossing the thresholds of the world, and experiencing the unexpected reversal of fortunes, prove that salvation, though temporary, always follows a long period of suffering.

It is worth thinking about the traditional metaphorical associations of the sea in poetry which Euripides could draw on. The significance of the sea in Greek metaphorical thought is intimately associated with the role of the sea into the ancient Greek maritime culture and society. Throughout these pictorial and verbal narratives in *Iphigenia in Tauris*, we can also trace how Euripides develops a maritime poetic vocabulary, which has already been established as a semantic range in earlier poetry, especially tragedy, and incorporates into the dramatic structure of *Iphigenia in Tauris* a vast majority of nautical terms and metaphors in order to foreground the inextricable

connection between seafaring, life, and salvation.

As a locus of transition, in ancient Greek theatre, in general, as we have seen in this thesis, the sea constitutes an 'invisible' passage to remote lands of death, salvation, and metamorphosis. The sacrifice of Iphigenia in the mythical tradition set in motion a series of journeys, which play a crucial role to the evolution of the plot in many ancient Greek tragedies: the Greek navy sails to Troy; Agamemnon returns to Argos ending his life through a fatal symbolic journey crossing the red carpet; Orestes suffers an unbearable suffering of wanderings after his matricide. However, Iphigenia's journey from Argos to Aulis, through Odysseus' trickery, which is based on a mock marriage with Achilles (*I.T.* 24-26), also signifies, early in the play, the delusive hope of every departure in the Atreides' lives. Her father Agamemnon 'brought her to a bloody wedding by treachery' (*ἐς αἱματηρὸν γάμον ἐπόρθμευσας δόλῳ, I.T.* 371), portending his own bloody bath, deceitfully organized by Clytemnestra after his victorious return from Troy and his arrogant treading on the red carpets; a powerful scene which was staged in the famous Aeschylus' *Agamemnon* a few decades previously. The verb *ἐπόρθμευσας* means 'to carry over' or 'ferry over' a strait, river or the sea and hence reflects a journey across water. The events at Aulis reveal the fatal destination of this journey, which is not to the palace of Peleus, but the underworld. The sacrifice of Iphigenia signifies that Agamemnon could be symbolically identified as the ferryman of the dead (*νεκύων πορθμεὺς*) and the bridal journey to Aulis as the passage to Hades.[317] However, for Iphigenia, Achilles is symbolically transformed into the ghost-bridegroom and the young maiden becomes a bride of Hades. The identification of Achilles with Hades finds further support through his epiphany as the apparition in Euripides' *Hecuba,* demanding the human sacrifice of the Trojan maiden princess Polyxena as 'a gift of

[317] Kyriakou (2006, 141).

honour' (*φίλον πρόσφαγμα καὶ γέρας, Hecuba* 41).

The two teenagers' non-existent wedding on the shores of Aulis determines their simultaneous routes eastward. Iphigenia and Achilles acquire a perpetual existence through the allusions to their immortalization and deification in literature, reflecting the ambiguous future described in the tragedy.[318] I mentioned in the previous section the multiple mythical references which imply that Achilles is an immortal inhabitant of the island Leuke; an islet located east of the mouth of Danube river in the Black Sea. Iphigenia, after being saved, is transported by Artemis through the air to the Crimean Chersonese. For the ancient poets, the Black Sea, as well as a geographical region, was a space of myth and illusion, a liminal border between reality and fantasy. In the Homeric Hymns, Hades and Poseidon are portrayed as dark-haired (*κυανοχαῖτα*),[319] which could have a correlation with the representation of the Black Sea as a space of dangerous navigation, disappearance, and death. The transformation of the inhospitable Black Sea into a hospitable region, inhabited by immortal heroes, indicates the euphemistic spirit of the ancient Greeks. Their heroes dwell in islands beyond the edges of the world where the sun rises and sets. The toilsome adventures of humans to explore the geographical boundaries of their own world is, in essence, the effort to satisfy their impatient curiosity and imagination about the mysteries of life and the prospects of life beyond death.

[318] Herodotus (4.103), in describing the Taurian customs, refers to the ritual sacrifice of shipwrecked sailors and enemies captured during war, to the maiden. He also mentions that 'the Tauroi themselves say that the divinity to whom they sacrifice is Iphigenia daughter of Agamemnon' (*τὴν δὲ δαίμονα ταύτην τῇ θύουσι λέγουσι αὐτοὶ Ταῦροι Ἰφιγένειαν τὴν Ἀγαμέμνονος εἶναι*, Herodotus 4.103.2). Iphigenia's transportation and Artemis's granting of her immortality (*ἀθάνατον ποιεῖ*) is also mentioned in Stasinus' *Cypria* as summarized by Proclus and preserved in Photios (West, 2003, 74). Another reference to Iphigenia's immortality is illustrated in the *Catalogue of Women* by Hesiod, in which a woman called Iphimede is saved and transported by Artemis (Fr.23b). Pausanias' reference to the Hesiodic catalogue confirms that 'Iphigenia did not die, but by the will of Artemis is Hecate' ('*Ἰφιγένειαν οὐκ ἀποθανεῖν, γνώμῃ δὲ Ἀρτέμιδος Ἑκάτην εἶναι*', Pausanias 1.43.1).

[319] For Hades: Homeric *Hymn 2*, *to Demeter* (*Ἄιδη κυανοχαῖτα,* 347), and for Poseidon: *Hymn 22 to Poseidon* (*Ποσείδαον γαιήοχε, κυανοχαῖτα*, 6), (West, 2003).

The immortal Achilles and the mortal Iphigenia dwell in regions of 'nowhere' like ghosts. They are so close to death and simultaneously so close to life. For both of them the sea is the only path that is able to take them to their beloved ones. The immortal Proteus, after his deification by the Nereid Thetis, in her epiphany-speech at the end of Euripides' *Andromache* (1259-1262), could visit his son on the shores of Leuke, as long as Orestes arrives and reunites with his lost sister in the Taurian land. After their transportation to the Black Sea, Achilles and Iphigenia acquire a common 'postmortem' topographical background and their identities were closely connected with the cults and the sacred ceremonies of *Euxeinos Pontos*.[320] However, they remain separated and isolated figures in their perpetual and parallel afterlives.

The trickery of Aulis which leads to the departure of the Greek ships to Troy will be repaid with another kind of trickery, one which sets in motion Iphigenia's return to Greece. Iphigenia, early in her life, experiences the consequences of humans' deceitful spirit and the betrayal of her compatriots. Now, years later, it is she who will organize a deceitful plan in order to succeed in her flight from the barbaric territory. Aulis represents the unpredictability of human life but first and foremost shows how an instantaneous decision could set off a chain of events, which leads to conflicts and loss, exile and slavery, nostalgia and *nostos*. Like the cows at the seashore of Tauris, killed by Orestes, at Aulis Iphigenia is nearly slaughtered like a calf by his father Agamemnon. In repayment for her unjust death Iphigenia hopes that someday Helen, who caused her loss, and Helen's husband Menelaus, will be sacrificed in Tauris. As vengeance for her sacrifice, Iphigenia wants Tauris to be transformed into her own Aulis (*τὴν ἐνθάδ' Αὖλιν ἀντιθεῖσα τῆς ἐκεῖ, I.T.* 358).

[320] For the cults of Achilles in Euxine see chapter 3.2.1.3 of this thesis. For the cult of Artemis-Iphigenia see Popova (2011, 57-68).

In Tauris, Iphigenia does not hesitate to use practices which ironically evoke her mock wedding ceremony at Aulis. Her delicate bridal veil conceals her eyes and prevents her having to face coming into contact with reality. It could be suggested that Iphigenia's faceless presence foreshadows her impending loss. Iphigenia becomes a sacrificial victim, an animal without identity. She will be devoted to Hades, and for whom Achilles, as I mentioned above, represents the macabre bridegroom of her nuptial funeral (*Ἅιδης Ἀχιλλεὺς ἦν ἄρ', I.T.* 369). When Iphigenia delivers instructions to Thoas and the citizens of Tauris, that she wishes to cleanse the statue in the sea, as part of her plan to misguide them, she asks Thoas to 'place a garment in front of his eyes' (*πέπλον ὀμμάτων προθέσθαι, I.T.* 1218a). These coverings on the face of the victims of deception prevent their eyes from confronting the light of the truth. The image of the 'blind' king could be a visual recreation of Iphigenia having been tricked by her father, Agamemnon. Iphigenia's face remains modestly indistinct, symbolically trapped in an endless virginity, her body concealed in the midst of her transportation until the goddess Artemis substitutes the maiden's sacrificed body with that of a deer.[321]

Instead of her bridal journey to Phthia, Iphigenia travels through the air to the remote Crimea to undertake her duties as a priestess at the temple of Artemis, the only example of a priestess protagonist character in the corpus of extant Greek tragedy.[322] Peleus' palace (*Πηλέως/ μέλαθρα, I.T.* 375-6) is left empty for a time, abandoned by Thetis, who left the palace of the Thessalian king in order to return to the sea. But the Argive princess Iphigenia never resides in Phthia, as her marriage hymeneals were

[321] The story of Euripides' *Iphigenia in Tauris* follows that of the sacrifice at Aulis, which is described in Euripides' *Iphigenia at Aulis*, by about twenty years, although it was written several years earlier. These mirror images between the 'blind' Agamemnon and the 'veiled' Iphigenia could be symbolically justified if we consider that the chronological evolution of the plot is based on the epic tradition of Iphigenia's myth at Aulis.
[322] Hall (2013, 142).

never sung. Instead, she inhabits the coastal territories of Tauris and Brauron after her salvations by Artemis and Orestes respectively.

Iphigenia's identity as an isolated outsider is confirmed not only by her liminal status in life but also in her location after death. In her speech, Athena identifies Iphigenia as 'the key-keeper in the holy meadows of Brauron where she will also be buried when she dies' (*Ἰφιγένεια, κλίμακας/ Βραυρωνίας δεῖ τῇδε κληδουχεῖν θεᾷ/ οὗ καὶ τεθάψῃ κατθανοῦσα, I.T.* 1462-1464).[323] Her tomb, in close proximity to the sea, both real cave and imaginary *adyton*, represents her liminality as a maiden separated from the norms of *polis* and *oikos*.[324] Indeed, the excavator John Papadimitriou argued that the caves in the southeast of the temple of Artemis in Brauron were connected with the tomb of Iphigenia and her cult.[325]

In Euripides' *Iphigenia in Tauris* the role of the cave is important as the dramatic environment used as a shelter by Orestes and Pylades. The hollow-faced cliff, bored out by the waves on the Taurian shore, has also a prominent symbolic function as an ambiguous space, which is inextricably connected with mythical figures, divine epiphanies and unexpected arrivals. Its remoteness from the sphere of the civilized

[323] The women of the chorus identify themselves as servants of the 'key-keeper' (*κληδούχου, I.T.* 131) Iphigenia. She is the key-holder and hence also the guard of the temple, having the advantage of being able to open the doors. This feature of her duties symbolically foreshadows her ability to liberate herself and her companions at the end of the play.

[324] As Buxton (1994, 105) mentions: 'the mythical caves resemble the mythical mountain associated with birth'. This observation also suggests a correlation between the cave, as the tomb of Iphigenia, and her cult, which received the dedications of the finely woven clothes, left behind by women who died in childbirth (*καὶ πέπλων/ ἄγαλμά σοι θήσουσιν εὐπήνους ὑφάς/ ἃς ἂν γυναῖκες ἐν τόκοις ψυχορραγεῖς/ λίπωσ' ἐν οἴκοις, I.T.* 1464-1468). The portrayal of the cave as a mountain also recalls the affinity between Iphigenia as untamed maiden, and her patron Artemis as a goddess of hunting, wilderness and wild animals.

[325] This argument is supported by the writer Euphorion who lived in the 3rd century B.C. Euphorion describes Brauron as 'near the sea, the cenotaph of Iphigenia', (fr. 95 in Van Groningen B.A., 1977 as cited in Ekroth 2003, 62). Nevertheless, Ekroth (2003,73-95) argues that there is no archaeological evidence to supports the link between Iphigenia and the presence of her tomb in Brauron.

world is a feature which has been considered as characteristic of isolated humans, heroes, and chthonian divinities whose status or cult was distinct from public society.[326]

The image of the cave signifies a boundary between two different worlds, and one in which the power of the sea evokes erosions, a metamorphosis of the rocky shoreline. It is this power of water to erode and destroy, which allows the vision of water at the end of the play to generate feelings of fear and dread in relation to the Iphigenia's impending departure. As the maiden princess travels across sea and land, her long-awaited salvation becoming even closer, her temporary fear on facing the turbulent waters of the sea may also conceal an immediate, subconscious reluctance.

One of the servants who accompany Iphigenia and the two foreigners to the shore delivers a lengthy speech narrating the evolution of events and the moments of Greeks' escape. He reports:

κἀν τῷδε, δεινὸς γὰρ κλύδων ὤκειλε ναῦν

πρὸς γῆν, φόβος δ' ἦν παρθένῳ τέγξαι πόδα,

λαβὼν Ὀρέστης ὦμον εἰς ἀριστερόν,

βὰς ἐς θάλασσαν κἀπὶ κλίμακος θορών,

ἔθηκ' ἀδελφὴν ἐντὸς εὐσήμου νεώς,

τό τ' οὐρανοῦ πέσημα, τῆς Διὸς κόρης

ἄγαλμα.

[326] The character of the cave as a space of heroes' cults supports the heroic portrayal of Orestes as Argonaut suggested by Burnett (1971, 63).

Meanwhile a terrible wave had run the ship on the ground,

but the girl was afraid of wetting her foot.

So Orestes took her onto his left shoulder,

stepped into the sea and jumped up onto a ladder,

and placed his sister within the fine-decked ship,

along with that bolt from the sky, Zeus' daughter's

image.

(*I.T.* 1379-1385)

According to the epic tradition, as a young maiden, Iphigenia failed to receive the nuptial bath at Aulis, the appropriate preparation for fertility and motherhood. Her unwillingness to pass through the sea waters in order to board to Greek vessel could be a symptom of her traumatic childhood, reflecting her unfulfilled desire to similarly pass through marriage, 'sacrificed' as she was for the benefit of the Greek fleet. Furthermore, for Iphigenia, ship's departures and arrivals are closely connected with death.

Immersion in the sea as a part of a ritual ceremony underscores not only purification but also the symbolic death of an old status and the acquirement of a new identity through rebirth. Iphigenia however, after the divine ordeals of Athena, will continue to be a priestess of Artemis in the holy meadows of Brauron. Frightened to wet her foot, Iphigenia arrests her symbolic rebirth and, although she is liberated from the

abhorrent duties she was compelled to perform previously, continues to be a suffering *parthenos.*[327]

The nautical word *πορθμεύω* is also used by Euripides to describe the arrival of a human or an object, which transfers practical information for the purpose of the plot. Throughout the Messenger's speech, the cowherd retreats back to his companions, 'navigating his way on tiptoe' (*ἄκροισι δακτύλοισι πορθμεύων ἴχνος, I.T.* 266), when he catches sight of two strangers sitting in a 'hollow-faced cleft' near the sea. Motivated by Orestes' moving narration about his painful past of being a refugee in his own country, Iphigenia asks him why he was forced to make the journey to the land of the Taurians (*τί γάρ ποτ' ἐς γῆν τήνδ' ἐπόρθμευσας πόδα, I.T.* 936). Euripides seizes the opportunity to mirror, via the wooden tablet, the idea of ships as sea-crossers that transfer goods, knowledge and experience. The exiled priestess hopes that the ferryman will arrive at Argos carrying the letter (*πορθμεύσειν γραφὰς, I.T.* 736), which will both save his life and will reveal the truth regarding Iphigenias' salvation at Aulis. However, after the recognition scene, her plans will be modified. Orestes and Pylades will depart 'stealing and transporting carved images and priestesses from the land of Taurians' (*πορθμεύετε/ κλέπτοντες ἐκ γῆς ξόανα καὶ θυηπόλους, I.T.* 1358-9). The truth about Iphigenia's destiny will not be revealed by the letter but by her own appearance in her homeland.

Living in close proximity to the sea and gazing into the vastness of the horizon, the exiled Greek women of the chorus hope for 'some sailors to arrive and end our pains of slavery' (*Ἑλλάδος ἐκ γᾶς/ πλωτήρων εἴ τις ἔβα,/ δουλείας ἐμέθεν/ δειλαίας παυσίπονος, I.T.* 448-451). In the chorus' song about the sorrows of their exile, the sea

[327] The symbolism of the nuptial bath not only ensures the fecundity and purity of the spouses but is also perceived as a procedure of a symbolic deflowering of the young maidens by the personified male deities (Dowden, 1989, 123). Also, for the conflation of wedding and funeral rites in ancient Greek tragedy, see Rehm (1994).

becomes an endless flowing wave of hope, depicted as the only feasible passage able to reunite them with their families and beloved homeland. Feelings of nostalgia are offered consoled by their anticipation of a 'pain-ending' (*παυσίπονος*) escape. The chorus' lyric song for the Greek saviours who will come from the sea poetically foreshadows the final departure of the protagonists. Their wish to 'enjoy in company this desirable delight' (*κοινὰν χάριν ὅλβου, I.T.* 455) will remain unfulfilled until the end of the play when the goddess Athena promises their salvation, instructing Thoas 'to bring these women of Hellas out of the country because of their righteous judgment' (*Ἑλληνίδας γυναῖκας ἐξεφίεμαι/ γνώμης δικαίας οὕνεκ', I.T.* 1468-9).

The fleeting aspect of the sea reaches the peak of its visual representation through the restless and limitless waves. The dramatic theatrical tableau of Euripides' *Iphigenia in Tauris* is the emblematic image of the sea and its forceful, dynamic transgression of the boundaries between humans and gods, life and death, homeland and exile. The changeability of water not only finds its symbolic expression as a stereotypical portrayal of the reversal of fortune but provides a more thrilling reflection of a journey to the invisible world of the human soul; a *katabasis* not as an eschatological symbol but as a dive into the cosmos of knowledge and self-identification.[328] Like the Apollonian dolphins, humans experience an intermediate status between light and abysses, the harshness of the waves and the violence of the winds, between sound and silence.[329]

This intermediate status of mortality exposes the humans to a tidal movement. Mortals experience the misfortunes of life as stormy waves and live in a constant billow

[328] Hartigan (1991, 95-96) portrays the journey of Orestes to the Taurian land as a *katabasis* to the underworld.

[329] Dolphins in ancient Greek mythology appear as helpers or rescuers of drowning humans. Apollo *Delphinios* was a dolphin form of the god. According to the *Homeric Hymn to Apollo*, the god, in the guise of dolphin, leads the first Cretan priests to his sanctuary at Delphi.

(*κλύδων*). The Messenger describes the company of locals who gathered and attacked the youthful strangers as 'a threatening wave of foes' (*ἔγνω κλύδωνα πολεμίων προσκείμενον, I.T.* 316).[330] The Taurians are presented as rushing waves, transforming the land metaphorically into a dangerous and inaccessible sea passage. Orestes and Pylades are portrayed as weak, shipwrecked, helpless sailors in the middle of the sea. Trying to escape with Iphigenia and the statue of the goddess Artemis at the end of the play, Orestes and Pylades are in an analogous desperate situation. The goddess Athena intervenes by asking the king Thoas why he is hunting them (*ποῖ ποῖ διωγμὸν τόνδε πορθμεύεις, I.T.* 1435). Without waiting for his response, she orders him to cease the pursuing, to 'stop launching the flood of his forces' (*παῦσαι διώκων ῥεῦμά τ' ἐξορμῶν στρατοῦ, I.T.* 1437). In these different senses, the prominent image of the sea is made an indistinguishable factor in the sea-voyage, as a determinant both of escape and salvation.

Nautical imagery is also prevalent in the first *stasimon,* where the enslaved Greek women of the chorus sing their lyric odes, 'turning their thoughts to the sea'.[331] They speculate about the motives that enforce the Greek sailors to cross over the waves of the ocean in their naval vessels, exposing their lives to the dangers of the vast and unpredictable sea. The chorus claims that, like so many mariners and traders crossing the seas, the reason for their exploration might be the pursuit of wealth. The chorus, grounded in broadly philosophical reflection on the futility of the pursuit of excessive wealth, point to the dangers of an insatiate life.

As expert mariners, the Greeks understood that expanding their knowledge which the deep sea concealed could bring them not only a mysterious, magnificent, and

[330] The word *κλύδων* is used another four times in the play, thereby preserving its literal meaning as a wave (316, 756, 1379, 1393, 1397).
[331] Barlow (2008, 26).

valuable world in itself, but also that their travails could lead them to lands and civilizations which might offer them wealth, prosperity and the power to rule over both allies and enemies. However, 'gathering a weight of wealth' (*ὄλβου βάρος οἳ φέρονται, I.T.* 416), the wanderers of the sea could face the twist of fate which leads to disaster. Though sailing in a sea of misfortunes, the voyager Orestes (*ναυστολῶν, I.T.* 599) rejects Iphigenia's proposal of salvation, which relies on the sacrifice of Pylades. Pylades is his co-traveller and best friend and his slaughter is prevented by their mutual respect, friendship and love and would burden Orestes with 'a great weight' (*τὸ γὰρ σφαγῆναι τόνδε μοι βάρος μέγα, I.T.* 598).[332]

Having killed his mother Clytemnestra, Orestes is maddened by remorse, resulting in his delirious vision of the serpent women of Hades (*Ἅιδου δράκαιναν, I.T.* 286). The Messenger enlivens his report with a direct quotation of Orestes' words during the moments of his mental crisis.[333] The voice of Orestes' madness at the seashore enhances the tragic pathos and the delusions of Orestes' fantasy excite the audience's imagination. The messenger quotes Orestes:

ἦ δ' ἐκ χιτώνων πῦρ πνέουσα καὶ φόνον

πτεροῖς ἐρέσσει, μητέρ' ἀγκάλαις ἐμὴν

ἔχουσα — πέτρινον ὄχθον, ὡς ἐπεμβάλῃ.

[332] Kyriakou (2006, 204) observes the literal and metaphorical meanings of the nautical word *συμπλεῖ* (*I.T.* 600), which imply 'a nexus of mutability that determines Orestes stance'. It is also worth looking at the significance of Pylades' speech after Orestes has taken the decision to be sacrificed and offer the gift of salvation to him. Plyades says: 'It is shameful for me to stay living when you have died. I shared the voyage with you, and should share your death too' (*αἰσχρὸν θανόντος σοῦ βλέπειν ἡμᾶς φάος. κοινῇ τ' ἔπλευσα δεῖ με καὶ κοινῇ θανεῖν, I.T.* 674-5). Pylades' words highlight his reciprocal relationship with Orestes. Mentioning their common journey from Argos to Tauris via the sea, Pylades underscores their common journey through life.

[333] De Jong (1991, 164-5) compares the representations of Orestes' madness as dramatized on stage in Euripides' *Orestes* (253-276) with its narration by Messenger in Euripides' *I.T.* (281-314). See also Sansone (2012).

This one from her garments is belching flame and gore,

beating the air with her wings,

holding in her crocked arms my mother,

a rocky weight to hurl upon me.

(*I.T.* 288-290)

Furies attack him and a 'rocky weight' threatens to kill him, in revenge for his matricide. The metaphor of the 'great weight' is transformed, in his paranoid mind, from an unpleasant and painful feeling to images of stones of punishment.[334] The chthonic children of the Night hunt Orestes, obsessing over him, and cast a bleak shadow over the light of the house of Atreids (*φῶς σκήπτρων, I.T.* 187).[335] Orestes travels to escape from them, searching for a peaceful harbour to protect him rather than further wanderings in the seas of misfortunes. The pursuit of his prosperity has not ended with material goods for valuable cargoes. His only wish is to find a way to repay his divine patrons so that he can earn his right to live without the pains of his mortality.

When the pair of Greek friends enter the stage conversing, under fear of being observed by locals, the wanderer Orestes (*περιπολῶν, I.T.* 84) explains the reasons for

[334] The image may have been recalled by the audience who heard Electra's question to the Messenger in Euripides' *Orestes*. Electra asks him if he knows if they will die alongside her brother by stoning or by the sword, setting in motion the messenger's narration, which describes the debate of the citizens of Argos regarding their punishment.

[335] When Iphigenia despairs over her 'misleading' dream, which shows her the death of her brother, the women of the chorus sing, in antiphonal 'barbaric' hymns, about the loss of Orestes, identifying him as the last light of the destroyed house of the Atreids. In Iphigenia's bleak destiny, Orestes would be the last hope, and finally is. There is also an ironic touch when Orestes responds to his sister's question of whether the Agrives mentioned her after her sacrifice. Orestes tells her that nobody says any more than that she is dead and 'no longer sees the light' (*I.T.* 564). Contrary to their belief, Iphigenia is not only alive but also the 'light' of his life: her beloved brother is in front of her but, temporarily, she cannot recognize him. After the two siblings have recognized each other, Iphigenia calls him a 'light' (*φάος, I.T.* 849). For the light as a synonym of salvation in extant ancient Greek tragedy see Kyriakou (2006, 96).

their sailing from Argos (*ναῦν ποντίαν, I.T.* 70) to the unknown and unfriendly land of Tauris (*ἄγνωστον ἐς γῆν, ἄξενον, I.T.* 94). Phoebus had promised Orestes to release him from the yoke of madness and to end his sufferings if his protégé managed to steal the statue of Artemis and transport it to the land of the Athenians (*I.T.* 85-92). The ship was secretly moored (*κρύφιος ἦν ὡρμισμένη, I.T.* 1328) and waits for them to depart with the divine statue.

The Taurian land is portrayed as a space of no return for the Greeks, whose journey ends violently at the bloodstained temple of Artemis. The navigators who escape the rushing waves of the Unfriendly Sea have moored on an equally hazardous and inhospitable shore, haunted by a bloody sanctuary. Orestes and Pylades have to reverse their fate and escape to safety from the 'enclosing walls' which trap them in their destiny like fish in nets, and instead follow the same aqueous passage which brought them to Tauris, and sail back to their homeland.[336] For Orestes, his voyage to the sanctuary of Artemis leads to his salvation. Propitiating the sea and the ambivalent divine wrath, Orestes also propitiates his own demons. His heroic adventure recalls the achievements of the legendary Argonauts.

The mythical Argonaut expedition is an archetypal exploration of the edges of the world and specifically to the Black Sea. The heroism of the achievement of Orestes and Pylades in navigating the Unfriendly Sea and dropping anchors in the waters of Tauris is justified by the bleak destiny of all those Greek sailors who had been sacrificed at the temple of Artemis. The play marks the Symplegades as the boundary separating two distinctly different, even partially conflated, worlds. In the notoriously narrow passage, helpless sailors lost their lives.

[336] The use of the word *ἀμφίβληστρα* is also used by Aeschylus as an adjective for fishing and casting nets (Aesch. *Ag.* 1382; *Ch.* 492).

The clashing rocks become a symbolic passage to death. The dark turbulent waters are portrayed as a passage to Hades and may have reminded the audience of the turbulent waters of the Black Sea, the crazy waters of Euripus, and the eddies in which Agamemnon sacrifices Iphigenia. The 'Clashing Rocks' are the crucial and the most determinate part of the journey, a point at which Orestes, as symbol of salvation, will pass between the dark stones.[337] The Symplegades mark the broader region inhabited by the barbaric Taurians (*I.T.* 260).[338] For the enslaved Greek women and Iphigenia, it is a path to the impending arrivals of rescuers, of those opposing their barren exile. Although the winds' propulsion does not wash either Helen or Menelaus ashore - thereby satisfying Iphigenia's greatest desire for revenge on the couple who cause her death - Orestes and Pylades 'arrive, fleeing on their ship the dark Symplegades' (*ἥκουσιν ἐς γῆν, κυανέαν Συμπληγάδα/ πλάτῃ φυγόντες, I.T.* 241-2) as saviours and capable sailors to escort the statue of the goddess Artemis and Iphigenia back to Greece.[339]

To summarize this section, I suggest that in *Iphigenia in Tauris*, Euripides not only represents salvation as a fundamental and prevailing subject of the play, but also as a visual image of that which Pylades describes as '*τὸ κλεινὸν ὄνομα τῆς σωτηρίας'*. Many of the characters are identified as, or act as, rescuers. Furthermore, theatrical props like the wooden letter, and the wooden statue of the goddess Artemis, as much as exploitable dramatic 'devices' like the vessel of the Greek escapees, suggest aspects of

[337] It is an attractive to connect the beacons which light the victory and which, in a more symbolic way, illustrate the return of the Greek army after the sacking of Troy, with the return of Orestes passing through the Symplegades as *φαός* to save his sister, the innocent victim of the expedition.
[338] The Dark Rocks mark the entrance the Black Sea, many nautical miles away from the Taurian land. However, as Hall (1987, 429) observes, 'the rocks in the straits of the 'Thracian' Bosporus were so closely associated with the sea beyond that they could be invoked in its place'.
[339] The word 'Symplegades' is mentioned four times in the play (241, 260, 355, 1389). Further poetic variations are present as well: converging rocks (*πέτρας τὰς συνδρομάδας, I.T.* 422), dark rocks (*κυανέας ἔξω πέτρας, I.T.* 746), dark rocks' narrow passage (*στενοπόρου πέτρας, I.T.* 890).

salvation visually.[340] The sea is the only feasible passage that allows the hopes of freedom to be fulfilled and the orders of the gods to be accurately followed by their mortal protégés.

3.3.2 The poetry of Sound in Euripides' *Iphigenia in Tauris*

The sea is not only an idea; it is a vast territory of blue waters and stormy waves. It contains not only the images of nature, but also its sounds. The sea is the echo of waves crashing on the rocks and the silent calm waters in the middle of the ocean. The sound of the sea, this continuous music of movement, is a constant reminder that life goes on. Those tragic heroes isolated in the sea voice their despair to the sky and await a ship to arrive in order to change their miserable life. The faraway horizon illustrates the unpredictable destiny of man. Voices of the future and the metaphysical sounds of the past travel through the sea and determine the characters' present conditions.

In Euripides' *Iphigenia in Tauris*, the soundscape of the play consists of natural sounds, human voices, music and silence. The poetic universe of the play can be seen as a semantic nexus of sounds that reflects the emotional status of the characters and underlines, structurally, the crucial dramatic moments of the story. The constant movement of the sea, the result of tides and winds, finds expression in the sleepless souls and troubled thoughts of life's human navigators.

Early in the play, Iphigenia mentions 'the crowding breezes of Euripus', a metaphor which also reflects that the felicitous life she was destined to have as an Argive princess instead gave way to another fate: the power of the wind churns not only

[340] The antique murder weapon of Pelops (*I.T.* 823), the symbol of the family's first crime, becomes token of a recognition which leads to the family's salvation.

the dark waves but also her life. This dramatic image of the frenzied waters of Euripus illustrates, in the most obvious way, the constant movement of the sea, which always changes shape, directions, and colour.[341]

The so-called 'Euripus phenomenon', which continues today, is characterized by strong tidal currents, which change direction around four times per day. These violent, shifting currents of the strait, which lies between mainland Greece and the island of Euboea, create precarious conditions of navigation, and it is impossible to sail across when the flow reversal causes vortex formation.[342] The geographical reference to Euripus signifies perfectly the mutability and unpredictability of a human life. Iphigenia recalls the traumatic experience of her sacrifice to Artemis in the famous clefts of Aulis. The prologue speech of the play serves to reveal to the audience the crucial transitional moments of her life. Painting her past with words, which seems to be emotionally detached, Iphigenia refers to 'the crowding breezes of Euripus that churn the dark swell' (*Εὔριπος πυκναῖς/ αὔραις ἐλίσσων κυανέαν ἅλα στρέφει, I.T.* 6-7), which express her confused and perplexed soul. The sound of the breezes, which stir the straits of Euripus, also foreshadows the significance of the wind as an engine that generates both sorrow and hope.

Favourable breezes accompany the return voyage to Greece in the daydreams of the chorus, and are the strongest wish in the prayers of escapees. In the second antistrophe of the second *stasimon*, the bird-flight, which the chorus desires, echoes, in the idea of wings forcefully hitting the air, the aerodynamic propulsion to freedom of the breeze. This metaphor corresponds very closely with the allegorical image of the ship as a bird and a means of transition, embodying the desire for flight, freedom and a

[341] The word Euripus consists of the words *ευ+ριπή* (brash flow) and is used to signify streams with a strong rush.
[342] http://antonios-antoniou.gr/en/tides-and-the-euripus-phenomenon

homeward journey.[343] As the birds beat the air with their wings, the oars of the ship beat the waters. The swift and rhythmic motion of oars, into and over the surface of the sea, propels the ship forward in the same way as its wings allow a bird to fly. This emblematic metaphor has its origins in epic poetry and significantly in the Homeric *Odyssey* when Teiresias, in Hades, prophesies Odysseus' future.[344]

The image of the oarsmen splashing their oars in unison produces sounds, which, to those who had taken part in naval expeditions or trade voyages at some moment in their lives, would have evoked powerful memories of those sea journeys. The sea is imagined as an aqueous forest and its deep waters an obscure passage inhabited by untamed creatures. Sailors, soldiers and travelers should have the stamina and strength to control the sea like hunters trying to tame a wild animal. When the windy weather does not allow the sailing of the fleet, the oars beat the sea in order to subjugate it, succeeding in the longed for departure.[345] In *Iphigenia in Tauris*, the sound of oars is emphatic and striking. Euripides uses the word *ῥόθος*, which means the rushing noise of oars that stir up a whitening surf.[346] The steering oars also 'sing at the stern, under southerly breezes or Zephyr's breaths' (*συριζόντων κατὰ πρύμναν/ εὐναίων πηδαλίων/ αὔραις σὺν νοτίαις/ ἢ πνεύμασι Ζεφύρου, I.T.* 431-434). The hiss of the steering oars recalls the chorus' reference to the shrill sound of Pan's reed, another sound, which urges the oarsmen on (*συρίζων θ' ὁ κηροδέτας/ κάλαμος οὐρείου Πανὸς/ κώπαις ἐπιθωΰξει, I.T.* 1125-1127) and the seven-stringed lyre's voice of Phoebus (*κέλαδον ἑπτατόνου λύρας/ ἀείδων, I.T.* 1129-1130).

[343] On similar choral odes in Euripides' *Helen* and *Hippolytus*, where 'the voyage to Greece of play's central female figures is paralleled by the flight of birds which are identified (explicitly or implicitly) with the chorus', see Padel (1974, 227-241).
[344] Homer's *Odyssey* (11.125).
[345] Kyriakou (2006, 149) mentions that oars and sails were used at different stages of the voyage because there is no need for rowing when favourable winds billow the sails.
[346] Euripides *I.T.* (407, 426, 1132, 1387).

These sounds of nature, accompanied by divine instruments, illustrate a harmonious soundscape, one which is integrated into the lyric part of the tragedy and more specifically into the chorus' songs. I have already mentioned above that the women of the chorus expressed their wish, in the second strophe of the second *stasimon*, to follow the Argive Greek *penteconter* in enjoying the divine music of the mountain-roaming Pan, who produces shrill sounds with his wax-bound reed, and the seven-stringed lyre of Phoebus.[347] The chorus, instead of lamenting their sorrows like Halcyon, with whom they momentarily compare themselves in the first strophe, finally wish, in a more hopeful way, to take part in a 'musical dancing procession'.[348] The chorus' arrival 'above the chambers of their home' (*I.T.* 1140) is signified by 'the cease of the fluttering wings upon their backs' (*I.T.* 1141-1142) and their new life will be a celebration, with the chorus participating in circular dances. This image mirrors the oval sacred lake of Delos, which 'whirls around its circling water, where the melodious swan gives service to Muses' (*λίμναν θ' εἱλίσσουσαν ὕδωρ/ κύκλιον, ἔνθα κύκνος μελῳ/ δὸς Μούσας θεραπεύει, I.T.* 1103-1105).[349] The women of the chorus indirectly imagine themselves as Nereids, the dancing nymphs. Their helpful and protective status is closely connected to the Nereids' desire to fight against perilous storms in order to save the sailors. The sound of wind and sea is conflated with the rhythmic sound of oars hitting the waves and the song of the sacred swans of Apollo.

But, although the swan is a symbol of harmony and beauty, as part of the imagery concerning the sacred island of Delos in the first strophe of the second *stasimon*, its most melodious song is sung in the last moments of its life. The echo of this melancholic sound is poetically transformed by Euripides into the chorus' nostalgic

[347] During the Arcaic period the fifty-oared ship was the common type of naval vessel. Thucydides (1.14) supports the view that before the Persian Wars more of the Greek fleets consisted of *penteconters*.
[348] Cropp (2000, 242).
[349] For the oval lake of Delos see Hdt 2.170, Callim. *Hymn*. 2.59, 4.261s.

odes for their homeland. The women of the chorus compare themselves to Halcyon. They lament, 'pining for Hellenes' gatherings' (*ποθοῦσ' Ἑλλάνων* ἀγόρους, I.*T.* 1096) and celebrations in which they cannot participate. They remember the 'abundant streams of tears that fell upon' their cheeks (*ὦ πολλαὶ δακρύων λιβάδες/ αἳ παρηίδας εἰς ἐμὰς, I.T.* 1106-1107), when the enemies captured them and the hostile oars and spears shipped them away of their homes. The mood of the enslaved women of the chorus shifts from harmony to sorrow and the lyric songs illustrate a chaotic soundscape of gushing streams of tears, which evoke the destruction of their Greek cities and their enforced exile.[350] Weaving through time and space, the thoughts of the women are expressed via their song as the most appropriate expression of their longings, feelings, and hopes.

Song, as I argued above, is the expression of emotions, and a significant theatrical feature in ancient Greek tragedy when simple words are incapable of describing the intensity of human feelings.[351] In Euripides' *Iphigenia in Tauris*, there are multiple references to a variety of songs. Iphigenia enters on stage in order to perform libations and singing 'painful lamentations' (*δυσθρηνήτοις ὡς θρήνοις, I.T.* 144). She does not raise hymns for Hera, nor on the sweet-voiced loom does she embroider with her shuttle the likeness of Attic Pallas and the Titans (*οὐδ' ἱστοῖς ἐν καλλιφθόγγοις/ κερκίδι Παλλάδος Ἀθίδος εἰκὼ/ καὶ Τιτάνων ποικίλλουσ'*, *I.T.* 221-222). Her sacrifice was a bleak celebration, accompanied by wedding hymns, the palace of her family filled with pipe-music (*ὑμνοῦσιν ὑμεναίοισιν, αὐλεῖται δὲ πᾶν/ μέλαθρον, I.T.* 367-368). The chorus, 'responding to her sorrow sing barbarian clamour of Asian

[350] On the paleographical difference between the words *Εὐρώπαν* (Europe) and *Εὐρώταν* (Eurotas), which evokes different interpretations about the Panhellenic or Spartan identity of the chorus, see Hall (1987, 430-433).
[351] On the role of music in ancient Greek life, as far as, the ancient Greek organology and musicology, see M.L.West's *Ancient Greek Music* (1992).

refrains' (*ἀντιψάλμους ᾠδὰς ὕμνων τ'/ Ἀσιητᾶν σοι βάρβαρον ἀχὰν, I.T.* 179-180), identify their dirges with music of Hades instead of songs of victory. Nevertheless, the chorus' last song, arguably the play's finale, is a hymn to the 'Venerable Victory' (*ὦ μέγα σεμνὴ Νίκη, τὸν ἐμὸν/ βίοτον κατέχοις/ καὶ μὴ λήγοις στεφανοῦσα, I.T.* 1497-1499). Athena's epiphany in giving instructions to Thoas for the enslaved women's return, makes their dreams, as expressed in the last lines of the first *stasimon*, come true, giving them the pleasure to enjoy singing glad hymns in their native city (*τερπνῶν ὕμνων ἀπόλαυ/ σιν, κοινὰν χάριν ὄλβου, I.T.* 454-455).

Various other sounds make the narration of Iphigenia's adventure in Tauris a vivid journey abundant in echoes of voices, strange noises and natural vibrations. Blowing on conchs (*κόχλους τε φυσῶν, I.T.* 303), the Taurians not only give voice to their predicament by summoning up the locals, but perhaps also make a plea for protection from those divine powers which, a few moments before, they saw sitting at the 'hollow-faced cleft'. The music of seashells, empty shelters of once living shellfish, becomes the voice that will protect the helpless cowherds and, in a more metaphysical way, sounds the alarm for the sea divinities to defend their own environment.

The seismic waves of the earthquake, felt even within Iphigenia's dream and which provide a plausible explanation for Artemis' removal, become signs of a metaphysical and unexplained symbolism. The audience observes the aftermath of the tremor, which, in Iphigenia's dream, causes the Argive palace to collapse. The destruction leaves behind a single pillar gifted with a human voice, mirroring Orestes' appearance immediately after Iphigenia's speech. The vibrations of earth displacing the ground foreshadow the arrival of Orestes and his frightened voice entering on stage could echo symbolically his power to 'displace' the statue of Artemis and his sister far away from the Taurian land. Within the dramatic structure, the metaphorical use of the

earthquake thus reinforces the evolution of the plot. When Thoas questions the magical movement of the goddess Artemis, suggesting the earth-tremor as a possible reason for this, Iphigenia responds that the statue 'turned away backwards of its own accord'. The deceitful plan is organized meticulously by Iphigenia, and the earthquake fails to offer a good explanation that fits to Thoas' misguidance.

In the course of this chapter we have already encountered a range of 'sound effects' indispensable to the emotional status of the tragic heroes and the chorus. In concluding this section, I would like to underline the essential and effective role of the 'sound of silence' during the dramatic moments of the play. The vivid descriptions of natural phenomena, which parallel the multiple journeys, create a noisy, although poetic, background, one balanced by Euripides' use of silence at those points where it is useful for the evolution of the plot.

Iphigenia remains in silence for fear of Artemis stating her disapproval of the sacrificial rites at her temple in Tauris (*I.T.* 37). Orestes, isolated and unaddressed, suffers in silence (*I.T.* 951, 956). Although there are a few who feel compunction and offer him a table as a guest, he eats and drinks apart from them as a spring of pollution for his hosts. In their own isolation in the land of Tauris, the chorus's first word requires, literally, a religious silence as an act of praise, honour, or fear (*I.T.* 123). The chorus' silence is also a prerequisite in order to help the Greek protagonists achieve their escape (*I.T.* 1063, 1076), although within this decision lurks the possibility of women's death and endless silence if the Greek vessel will finally depart. Even the Taurians keep silence, fearing to set eyes on the purification ritual at the shore (*I.T.* 1343). However, aside from mortals' silent moments, the most crucial, though ambiguous silence, which determines the destiny of mortal characters, is the constant silence of Artemis' statue. Like those other silent statues near the sea, as the *agalmata*

on the coast of Argos in Aeschylus' *Suppliant Women*, Artemis' statue stands gazing soullessly into the horizon. Furthermore, in Euripides' *Iphigenia in Tauris*, the image of the divine maiden on board the ship provides one of the most poetic images in ancient Greek tragedy. The silent goddess, crossing the sea, is exposed to favourable breezes, and sprinkled by the dew of the waves. Her ceremonial purification is another kind of *εὐφημία*, not as a necessity for silence, but in honor to the once violent goddess.

3.3.3 A flight to Salvation

The nexus of journeys to and from Greece passes through both sea and sky. The delayed Hellenic expedition of a thousand ships is mentioned right at the beginning of the play, when Iphigenia presents the causes of her misfortunes. Calchas announces a crucial dilemma for the Greek army, and especially for the Argive king Agamemnon, in expressing the goddess Artemis' will to receive Iphigenia as sacrificial victim (*I.T.* 16-24): the slaughter of the maiden is required in order bring the favourable winds necessary for the fleet's departure.[352] If the deep waters of the sea conceal danger, mystery and death, then the limitless sky and the bright sun represented in a passage to truth, immortality, and utopia.

After the intervention of the goddess Artemis at Aulis, the Argive princess Iphigenia is transported to Tauris through the bright sky (*διὰ δὲ λαμπρὸν αἰθέρα, I.T.* 29). Her substitution remains unknown to the Greeks, who believe that 'she died and she no longer sees the light' (*πλὴν θανοῦσαν οὐχ ὁρᾶν φάος, I.T.* 564). The sacrifice of

[352] The lack of the winds (*ἀπλοίας πνευμάτων, I.T.* 15) prevents the launch. Nevertheless we should not underestimate Iphigenia's reference to the 'crowding breezes of Euripus', that 'churning the dark swell', that is mentioned a few lines before as a typical weather condition, one which characterizes, though poetically, the coastal regions near the channel.

any Greek visitor in the barbaric region of Tauris, and hence, their 'no return' back to their homeland, ensures that Iphigenia's salvation remains unrevealed to the Greeks. However, her journey is not a bleak passage to death but a flight to salvation 'under the sun'.[353]

Iphigenia's transportation from Aulis to the Taurian temple of the goddess Artemis is a flight to a sacred exile. Between the two shores, Iphigenia remains symbolically suspended between freedom and enforced holiness, marriage and virginity, life and death. The Argive maiden receives the gift of life but only once emotionally depressed and geographically isolated. The space that she inhabits can be metaphorically marked out as a space of 'nowhere'. Her brother Orestes, in describing his own liminal status, mirrors Iphigenia's condition, saying that he lives in tribulation, 'nowhere and everywhere' (*κοὐδαμοῦ καὶ πανταχοῦ, I.T.* 568). Iphigenia's body and soul undergo the pains of exile but she mentally travels to Greece, the only substantial pleasure left to her. For both Orestes and Iphigenia, all potential routes back to their home offer neither hope nor escape. The 'trackless paths' (*ὁδοὺς ἀνόδους, I.T.* 889) and 'impassable passages' (*πόρον ἄπορον, I.T.* 897) make the distance unbridgeable, but it is the feeling of love among family and friends, and the nostalgia for their homeland, which forces them to search for 'the glorious title of salvation' (*τὸ κλεινὸν ὄνομα τῆς σωτηρίας, I.T.* 905) that offers them a journey to a place of shelter.

Flying with Artemis through the sky, and returning to her homeland on the winged-vessel via the sea, the maiden priestess shifts from death to salvation. The motif of the flying bird as synonym of salvation not only marks two crucial moments of her

[353] Iphigenia's destiny is another example of what Edith Hall (2010) rightly observes as an essential feature of the Greek tragic characters. 'Suffering under the sun', Iphigenia undergoes a life in despair. Although she is alive, she dwells in a barren land without marriage, children, city and friends (*ἄγαμος ἄτεκνος ἄπολις ἄφιλος*, *I.T.* 220) and her salvation spins out of her misfortunes.

life – her sacrifice at Aulis and the departure voyage from the Taurian shores – but also creates a sense of movement in the passage to freedom, enabling the audience to imagine the world from the perspective of a journey of flight.

The image of the statue of Artemis on the vessel may commemorate an analogous visual representation of victory in ancient Greek art. My suggestion is based on the reciprocal relationships between art works that evoke such inspirational parallels, which the audience would have detected through the centuries. It is noteworthy to mention here an image of Artemis, depicted as the *Potnia Theron* (Lady of the Beasts) on a volute *krater*, signed by Kleitias and dated between 570-560 B.C. The goddess is winged and grasps a panther (or lioness) and stag by the neck.[354] Furthermore the archaic winged Artemis lingered on in many ex-votos from the eighth to the sixth century B.C as Artemis Orthia. The statue of Winged Victory of Samothrace, a masterpiece of the Hellenistic sculpture of the 3rd-2nd century BC, which would have stood on the prow of a ship, braced against the strong wind blowing through her garments, may reflect in an impressively theatrical manner the victorious flight of Artemis to a glorious future.[355] The energy and forward motion of the winged statue of Victory, one foot just alighting on the ship's deck and the other still in the air, recalls images of freedom and salvation by sea and sky, like Artemis' journey via the sea from the barbaric Taurian land to Greece.

The link between Artemis and the image of the winged goddess could also be reinforced by the existence of a cult on the northern shores of the Black Sea in which a bird-goddess called Swan-Maiden, 'probably winged like the 'Persian Artemis' and

[354] Museo Archeologico Nazionale di Firenze, Florence, Italy (No.4209).
[355] Athena Nike statue's was thought to be deprived of wings so that it could never leave the city. This led Athenians in the later centuries to call it *Apteros Nike* (Wingless Victory).

with bloodthirsty tastes', was worshipped.'[356] In Euripides' *Iphigenia in Tauris* the 'silent' Artemis portrays an ambiguous divinity whose intentions remain uncertain until the end of the play. Despite her connection with the sacrifice of Iphigenia at Aulis, and the Greeks' apotropaic sacrificial deaths in the land of Taurians, Artemis plays a crucial dramatic role, helping the characters of the play find their paths to salvation. Artemis may be the personified image of the 'Greatly revered Victory' to whom they pray to occupy their lives in the last *anapaests* of the tragedy (*I.T.* 1497.1499). In Euripides' *Iphigenia in Tauris* Artemis is hidden behind her name and her portable carved statue is her only, though soulless, appearance during the play. Euripides does not present her as dramatic persona. Instead the goddess Athena serves the final speech as *dea ex machina*. Pallas, as a divine power supporting Apollo's wish to save his sister Artemis, leads both characters and plot to a favourable conclusion, restoring Artemis' tarnished reputation.

Artemis' desires are unexplained by mortals and confuse them, allowing multiple interpretations. Iphigenia deplores the goddess's practices but 'remains in silence for fear of the goddess' (*σιγῶ, τὴν θεὸν φοβουμένη, I.T.* 37). Artemis also remains silent (*εὐφημία*).[357] This can be seen as a method of transforming her blasphemous attitude into a neutral, then ambivalent, and finally positive position. On the other hand Artemis, trapped in a barbaric land, is unable to defend her status, as much as Iphigenia is unable to defend her destiny. Their relation is frequently underlined during the course of the tragedy, a relationship whose character is fundamentally determined by Iphigenia's salvation.

[356] Manning (1920, 54).
[357] Montiglio (2010, 134) observes that the word *εὐφημία* 'encompasses both silence and speech: the utterance of the well-omened words and the silencing of ill-omened ones'.

Artemis' intervention at Aulis, and the transportation of her *xoanon* as a prerequisite for Orestes' salvation, justifies her cultic title of *Soteira* (Saviour).[358] According to Pausanias, Artemis was worshipped as *Soteira* in Megara, in Peloponnesian Troezen, at Boiai in Lacedemonia, and at Heraclea in Italy, for reasons that are closely associated with the myth and history of these regions. The healer goddess, as a power of assistance and salvation, defended the locals against enemies, misfortune, and from physical and psychological maladies.[359] In Euripides' *Iphigenia in Tauris*, the statue of Artemis becomes the prize of Orestes' dangerous mission and indirectly guides him to salvation.

Orestes' madness on the shores of Tauris is caused by the pursuit of the Furies. The supernatural winged divinities cast a shadow over his life like a hunting net that traps him into a yoke of madness.[360] Such animal motifs recur throughout the play, illustrating a hunting game between Greeks and barbarians, gods and mortals, vengeful hunters and resistant victims. Orestes, as the Messenger reports:

> ὃ δὲ χερὶ σπάσας ξίφος,
>
> *μόσχους ὀρούσας ἐς μέσας λέων ὅπως,*
>
> *παίει σιδήρῳ λαγόνας ἐς πλευράς θ' ἱείς*

[358] For the connection between the theme of rescue in *I.T.* and the cult titles of Artemis as *Soteira* see Hall (2013, 27).
[359] Pausanias (1.40.2, 2.31.1, 3.22.12) as cited in Hall (2013,27).
[360] The description of Orestes and Iphigenia's condition as yoked, and like caged animals, could also be connected with the ritual ceremonies concerning the transition between childhood and adulthood. At Brauron, in the festival of Arkteia, young girls act as bears for Artemis. For the connection between Orestes and Apollo as god of initiation, and his ephebic status as a wanderer on the wild frontiers, see Bierl (1994, 81-94). For the connection between hunting and the Greek ephebes see Vidal Naquet (1968, 1998) and Barringer (2001).

leapt like a lion in among the cattle, and struck them with his blade, thrusting at flanks and ribs

(*I.T.* 296-298)

Interestingly, there is a very close parallel with a scene in Sophocles' *Ajax*, in which the sailors of the chorus, hypothesizing about the causes of Ajax' madness, imagine that Artemis Tauropolos is the divinity who drove him to madness and, as a result, against the herd. They wonder:

ἦ ῥά σε Ταυροπόλα Διὸς Ἄρτεμις

ὦ μεγάλα φάτις, ὦ

μᾶτερ αἰσχύνας ἐμᾶς

ὥρμασε πανδάμους ἐπὶ βοῦς ἀγελαίας

Was it Artemis ruler of bulls, Zeus's daughter,

that drove you, O powerful Rumor,

O mother of my shame,

drove you against the herds of all our people?

(Sophocles' *Ajax* 172-175)

Of course, the chthonic Tauropolos Artemis, in *Iphigenia in Tauris*, dooms the foreign sailors to their fatal sacrifice and Orestes' vision of her in winged form, creates a kind of hall of mirrors, an infinite reciprocal reflection with her vengeful aspect in *Ajax*. But it seems clear that her divine dynamic of 'flight' is represented, though in a

dubious light, with her ability to act, directly or indirectly, as Soteira. The final salvation of the Greeks and the transportation of her statue support the idea that she is not the one that leads Orestes to the crisis of his madness.

The image of the yoke is prevalent throughout the play. The characters struggle to be released from their persecutors and their difficult life conditions, described metaphorically as bonds, which keep them imprisoned. Clytemnestra's libation of the yoke of virginity and relief from the pains of childbirth inflicts a cycle of misfortunes on her children.[361] Phoebus directs Orestes' wanderings but the paths are haunted by an aura of revenge (*ὦ Φοῖβε, ποῖ μ' αὖ τήνδ' ἐς ἄρκυν ἤγαγες/ χρήσας, I.T. 77*-78).[362] The matricidal tragic hero is often pictured as an animal caught in traps undergoing a 'yoke of madness' (*τροχηλάτου/ μανίας, I.T.* 82-83).[363] Iphigenia 'manhandled by the Danaids for slaughter like a calf' (*οὗ μ' ὥστε μόσχον Δαναΐδαι χειρούμενοι/ ἔσφαζον, I.T.* 359-360) unwillingly presides over the rites of human sacrifices after her salvation.[364] She admits to the 'foreign' Orestes, before their mutual recognition, that she is 'under compulsion' (*ἀλλ' εἰς ἀνάγκην κείμεθ', I.T.* 620). Iphigenia's symbolic prostration to her goddess (*ἐγώ: θεᾶς γὰρ τῆσδε προστροπὴν ἔχω, I.T.* 620) identifies her as a permanent refugee maiden, symbolically submissive, and loyal to the apotropaic desires of the Taurian Artemis, in repayment for her salvation.[365] Kyriakou comments that the word *προστροπὴν* usually indicates supplication and, more specifically, the supplication of fugitive murderers who have not been purified. Hence I suggest that this 'prostration'

[361] Iphigenia emphasises her mother's pregnancy, saying: 'from the start my star has been ill-starred, from my mother's womb and from that night when I was born' (*ἐξ ἀρχᾶς μοι δυσδαίμων/ δαίμων τᾶς ματρὸς ζώνας/ καὶ νυκτὸς κείνας, I.T.* 203-205). The umbilical cord could also be symbolically connected with a yoke, suffocating life.
[362] For the image of Erinyes as hunting-dogs see Aesch. *Ch.* 924, *Eum.* 111; Eur. *Hel.* 1342-4.
[363] The image of Orestes as an animal victim is also stressed in line 1163 when Iphigenia uses the word *ἠγρεύσασθ'* (catch by hunting). For the yoke of madness motif in Euripides see also *I.T.* 934-5, *El.* 1253, *Or.* 367.
[364] The sacrifice of Iphigenia as an animal is also mentioned in Aeschylus' *Agamemnon.* 232; Eur. *I.A.* 1083, 1113.
[365] Kyriakou (2006, 207).

reinforces the impression of the maiden's pollution as a result of her sacrifices, and that the sprinkles of the waves, during her return journey, perform the role of a purification ritual both for the maiden and the goddess in order to be incorporated again into the Greek civilized world. The 'yoke of compulsion' is also connected to Agamemnon's decision in Aulis to sacrifice his daughter. The son of Atreus, victim of a wretched delusion, had donned the yoke of necessity and kills his child, adumbrating a bleak destiny for his family.[366]

The image of the yoke crucially marks the moments of the escapees' attempts to depart from the shores of Tauris. The locals, trying to prevent Iphigenia's boarding, 'hold the foreign woman and the stern-hawsers' (*εἰχόμεσθα τῆς ξένης/ πρυμνησίων τε, I.T.* 1355-1356). The stern-hawsers tied to the rocks of the shore, as far as, the anchor that holding the ship near the coast, are transformed into bonds, which prevent the vessel from departing. Even the ladder, a useful piece of nautical equipment, which is illustrated as a bridge to salvation, helping the protagonist to embark, could be characterized as a dangerous 'yoke' that conceals the possibility of a failed attempt and another dangerous passage, which holds the Greek protagonists 'tied' to the land of their exile.

Nevertheless the ship will finally function as bird and fly to salvation. Its oars, 'spread out like wings in trim array' (*ταρσῷ κατήρει πίτυλον ἐπτερωμένον, I.T.* 1646), will lead the crew to the open seas and then to the desired ports of Greece. The fast-moving ship crossing the waves could also be a poetic reflection of the birds flying among the clouds.[367]

[366]Aeschylus' *Agamemnon* 218-227.
[367] The metaphor recalls the opening lines of Euripides' *Medea* when the Nurse wishes that Argo had never sailed (*διαπτάσθαι,* Euripides' *Medea* 1) through the dark-blue Symplegades on its way to Colchis.

Bird flight is also a recurrent motif of escape in the nostalgic odes of the exiled women of the chorus. The transformation of the women into birds is a fantasy that consoles their unhappy slavery. Their song is compared to that of the Halcyon, lamenting the loss of her husband.[368] The Greek women lament their exile, identifying themselves as 'unwinged birds' (*ἄπτερος ὄρνις, I.T.* 1095) bewailing their isolation and pining for their repatriation. Their song is the utmost expression of their nostalgic yearnings for their families and homeland. But besides the common interpretations as a symbol of freedom and loyalty, the chorus' wish for flight may also conceal their desire for an endless release from the pains of life, through the dynamic of immortalization. In the second antistrophe of the second *stasimon* they sing:

λαμπροὺς ἱπποδρόμους βαίην,

ἔνθ' εὐάλιον ἔρχεται πῦρ:

οἰκείων δ' ὑπὲρ θαλάμων

πτέρυγας ἐν νώτοις ἁμοῖς

λήξαιμι θοάζουσα

If only I could travel that radiant chariot-road

where the Sun's fine fire goes,

and stop above the chambers of my home,

staying the motion

[368] For the Halcyon myth and traditions see Hes. fr. 10d; Apollod. 1.7.3-4; Ov. *Met.* 11.410-748.

of the wings upon my back

(*I.T.* 1138-1142)

The song mirrors Iphigenia's magical transportation through the bright sky to Tauris. The women were forced into a violent exile and traveled via the sea to the barbarian land. Now they wish to return through the sky. The chorus, like the divine escorts Pan and Phoebus, wants to accompany Iphigenia's naval voyage back to Greece. Their ability to fly would give them the capacity to cross all the roads of the universe. By land and sea as mortals, and through the air as birds, either as gods or mythical figures, they could pass over the geographical boundaries acquiring, even temporarily, a dynamic of immortality. The image of birds, which poetically accompanies Iphigenia, reflects the bird-thronged land (*τὰν πολυόρνιθον ἐπ' αἶ/ αν, I.T.* 435-6) of Leuke, which is inhabited by several species of birds, servants of Achilles' posterity.[369]

The distance between mortals and divine, in ancient Greek tragedy, was usually eliminated by the power of imagination, which expresses the desire of mortals to fly. In antiquity, the idea of travelling through the air was conceived of as a path of escape. Furthermore, the desire to fly not only involves a wish to fly far away from desperate conditions, but also conceals a hope for immortality.[370] The sky is conceived of as a vast space across which gods and birds could cross. The divine epiphanies *ex machina*, mainly at the end of the ancient Greek tragedies, signify restorative interventions or mysterious transportations. Through seeing either the sky under the bright sun or constellations in the moonlight, the ancient Greeks interpreted divine will, prophesied

[369] As Arrian describes, in his *Periplus of the Euxine Sea* (21-23), many birds nest on the island and look after Achilles' temple. They fly out to the sea, at dawn, and fly back with their drenched feathers sprinkling the temple with sea-water. Then they sweep the floor with their wings. Philostratus (*On Leuke* 54.2-57-17) also mentions that Achilles made the white birds of the island his servants.
[370] Larson (1995, 16).

the future, and imagined escaping far away from their mortality building, through the *Nephelokokygies* (Cloud Cuckoo Lands).

In Euripides' *Iphigenia in Tauris*, the ether is an important mode of transportation. Just as the sea illustrates voyages through the 'real world', the sky is used to describe imaginative transportation, illusory arrivals, and the fear of disappearance. Iphigenia is seized by Artemis, 'through the radiant sky' (*διὰ δὲ λαμπρὸν αἰθέρα, I.T.* 29) and lost in oblivion. Her landing in the Taurian land finds its parallel with the statue (*διοπετὲς, I.T.* 977) of Artemis, which fell from the sky and landed on the spot where her holy sanctuary was subsequently built.[371] The carved wooden figure of Artemis could be interpreted as a visual representation of a divine work of art or as an expression of a divine will – but its rituals in the Taurian land identifies her as an ambiguous divinity with chthonic characteristics.

Both Artemis and Iphigenia experience a kind of expulsion. They are refugees, deported from the civilized world. The statue of Artemis is reported to have fallen from the sky in a land where her name is connected with bloody sacrifices and Iphigenia, as Artemis' priestess, undergoes the continuous obligation to take part in these horrendous rituals. However, their separation from their 'natural' environment and their liminality, is mended by their final voyage back to Greece, a kind of incorporation, as we mentioned above. Artemis and Iphigenia's metaphysical arrivals from the fictional past of the play through the air are linked with the escape departures of the actual present by sea at the end of the play. The visual similarity between the blue sky and sea, which are 'coloured' with white clouds and waves respectively, create an appropriate milieu of imagined escapes in ancient Greek tragedy.

[371] For the correlation between the *διοπετὲς ξόανον* of Artemis in Ephesus and that of the Tauric cult as described by Euripides in *I.T.* see Hall (2013, 22,144). For the use of the word *διοπετὲς* in ancient Greek world see Wylie, C. C. & Naiden, J. R (1936, 514-519).

3.3.4 Coloured images and holy droplets

According to Hesiod's *Theogony*, the blood, which gushed from Ouranos' slashed genitals, was absorbed by Earth and Sea.[372] The blood, in a symbolic transformation, is interpreted as reproductive semen and impregnates Earth and Sea, by which process, Erinyes and Aphrodite, respectively, are conceived. The divine blood acquires the power to give birth to divinities with distinct characteristics despite their common origin. Hence the foam of the sea, from which the goddess Aphrodite emerged, correlates with the bloody soaked soil from which the vengeful Furies are produced.

The dynamic ability of these divine transformations, in accordance with the unpredictability of natural phenomena, generates a tragic landscape in which the gods acquire multiple forms and faces. In ancient Greek tragedy the 'invisible' interventions of gods whose identities are concealed beneath ambivalent interpretations of omens, dreams, oracles or weather conditions creates an all-pervasive sense of possibility. Consequently the stormy waves, which prevent the siblings' ship from departing at the end of *Iphigenia in Tauris*, could also be the transformed chthonic Furies. Their obsession to pursue the matricidal Orestes could be concealed behind the frenzied waters on the shores of Aulis. The intervention of the goddess Athena corresponds closely with her authoritative presence in Aeschylus' *Eumenides* where she also compromises the opposite parties.

Throughout Euripides' *Iphigenia in Tauris,* colourful images create a vivid representation of the natural environment as a prominent dramatic space. The word *κυανέος* is found five times into the play; four times as an epithet in order to describe the Black Sea (*I.T.* 241, 393, 746, 889) and once illustrating the waters of Aulis (*I.T.* 7).

[372] Hesiod's *Theogony* 472.

In Pindar's sixth *Paean* Achilles' mother Thetis is portrayed with dark hair (*κυανοπλόκοιο*, 83). Aeschylus, both in *Persians* (559) and *Suppliant Women* (743), uses the word black-eyed (*κυανῶπις*) to describe the ships. Similarly in the Homeric poems the prows of ships are describes as dark. The 'eyes of the ship', a common motif in archaic art and maritime tradition, provided a protective dynamic for the ships' difficult navigational conditions and has also been interpreted as a symbolic guide, which safely leads the ship to its destination. The black colour of Homeric ships was a skillful imaginative transformation of the necessity to apply pitch to part of the ship. Wachsmann states that 'the pitch applied to hulls for waterproofing and protection, a practice well attested in the later periods of antiquity'.[373] The common references to the Black Sea, except for defining geographically the broader region of the play's setting, represent the bleak atmosphere of the Taurian land as a space of death for the Greek sailors whose blood decorates the copings of Artemis' altar (*ἐξ αἱμάτων γοῦν ξάνθ' ἔχει τριχώματα, I.T.* 73).

Euripides not only paints the temple of Artemis with the colour of blood, but also the shores of Tauris where there is the persistent beat of the 'hollow-faced cleft bored out by the waves', a 'purple-fishers' shelter' (*ἦν τις διαρρὼξ κυμάτων πολλῷ σάλῳ/ κοιλωπὸς ἀγμός, πορφυρευτικαὶ στέγαι, I.T.* 262-263). Furthermore, characterised by the red of the blood of slaughtered cattle, the sea become a space of a futile sacrifice. The white foam of the endless motion of the sea-waves is transformed into a bloody image, which could be interpreted as a sign of pollution of the sea. The revenge of nature (or divine wrath) for this undesired sacrifice and subsequent pollution may explain the reversal of winds which prevents the Greeks' vessels from leaving from the Taurian shore.

[373] Wachsmann (2013, 206).

Another significant parallel between the white waves and Orestes' stormy soul is the foam which drips down his jowls when he is made haggard by the Furies' pursuit, throwing off the assaults of his madness during the episode at the seashore. His tempestuous psyche becomes mollified however when his friend Pylades, like a harbour in a storm, 'wiped off the foam and covering him with a finely-woven robe', offering consolation and protection to his friend's soul and body (*ἀφρόν τ' ἀπέψη σώματός τ' ἐτημέλει/ πέπλων τε προυκάλυπτεν εὐπήνους ὑφάς, I.T.* 311-312). Nevertheless, as his impending death will be avoided, his hair will remain auburn, like the hair on the pillar in Iphigenia's dream, and will neither be sprinkled with holy water, as part of the impending sacrificial ceremony, nor will be circled with a bloody dew as a result of his slaughter.[374]

The dream-narrative of Iphigenia, although it reveals her utmost desire to depart from the Taurian land and live in Argos, raises uncertainty and feelings of fear and agony concerning the possible restitution of the family and the circumstances of her new life. As Devereux points out, Iphigenia is a 'princess in distress'.[375] She is, indeed, a maiden in extreme anxiety and sorrow and her emotional trauma determines her days and nights. As priestess of Artemis, Iphigenia performs the consecrations before the human sacrifices according to the barbaric rites of Tauris, a duty which is reflected in her dream when she sprinkles the anthropomorphized pillar with holy water. The act of sprinkling acquires, through the multiple references and interpretations, an influence on her life which is both consoling and corrosive. In this section I will identify some

[374] The image of the transformation of lustral water into blood, sprinkling the hair of the victim, is illustrated by the chorus in the second antistrophe of the first *stasimon* when the Greek women wish Helen to arrive in Tauris, so that her 'hair circled with a bloody dew' (*ἵν' ἀμφὶ χαί-/ τᾳ δρόσον αἱματηρὰν, I.T.* 442-443).
[375] Devereux (1976, 272).

overarching patterns of the sprinkling of fluids, an act closely associated with rituals, murders, and emotions.

The sprinkling of the pillar, as illustrated in Iphigenia's dream, is interpreted by her as an act of purification before slaughter and, hence, as a sign of Orestes' death. But, unbeknownst to her, the dream actually foreshadows, in a subterranean way, the final purification of the Argive palace, which will be reconstructed after Orestes' successful mission, thereby justifying his role as a pillar of his household (*oikos*). Iphigenia is convinced that Orestes is absent from life and her absence prevents her from pouring libations on his tomb (*ἀποῦσ' ἀπόντι, I.T* 62). It is not only Orestes who does not know that Iphigenia is alive. The dream makes the situation more perplexing as a sign, although misinterpreted, that Orestes is dead. Isolated and far away from her homeland, Iphigenia decides to offer him libations as a symbolic offering, sprinkling, with appropriate honours, the surface of the earth. She pours milk, wine, and honey, substances that are comforts for the dead (*ἃ νεκροῖς θελκτήρια χεῖται, I.T.* 166). But her sorrow is expressed with the tears that bedew her face. With her tears, the lamentable (*πανδάκρυτος, I.T.* 553) daughter of Agamemnon illustrates the cycle of crimes and revenge. Her tears symbolically cleanse the bloody dew of Clytemnestra's murder.

The sombre drizzle of Agamemnon's bloody dew not only celebrates Clytemnestra, with the divine gift of rain, but also irrigates the roots of the 'blasted plant', which give promises for revenge.[376] The bloody fertilized earth will bear crops of calamity for Clytemnestra. Orestes holds the power of restoration, though his matricide

[376] In Aeschylus' *Agamemnon*, when the Argive king decides to walk on the purple vestments, Clytemnestra responds to him by comparing the house with a plant, which, so long as its roots still live, will continue to bear leaves (*ῥίζης γὰρ οὔσης φυλλὰς ἵκετ' ἐς δόμους,* Aesch. *Ag.* 966). Peradotto (1964, 381) notes that 'the ironic statement is unfulfilled in Agamemnon's case but as it applies to Orestes it vaguely points to a renewed growth for the house'. Hence the column could be correlated with the stem/trunk of the plant/tree, and the growing auburn hair on the head of the pillar with the leaves that are going to protect the family.

re-enacts another cycle of revenge, this time by the chthonic Furies. I mentioned above that, according to myth, the bloody rain on earth gave birth to Erinyes. The blood of Clytemnestra also compels the chthonic divinities to hunt Orestes. It is plausible to conjecture that the bloody rain with its reproductive energy creates a cycle of internecine crimes that only the water of purification could cleanse.

The pillar with its blond hair could be seen as a tree with a rounded crown of branches. Orestes is the rising hope of the Argive family and his maturation creates the appropriate conditions for the new generation's salvation. By contrast, Iphigenia remains an infertile maiden inhabiting a barren land. The sacrifice of the Greek men, who arrive in Tauris, portrays another kind of juxtaposition between sterile Tauris and fertile Greece. Sacrificing the Greek sailors, Iphigenia symbolically destroys any seed of hope.

It is also interesting to note the correlation between the pillar in Iphigenia's dream, and the description of the chorus concerning the altars and the columned temples, which are soaked with human blood (*βωμοὺς καὶ περικίονας/ ναοὺς αἷμα βρότειον, I.T.* 405-406). Iphigenia, sprinkling the strangers before they are sacrificed, inflicts on them a bloody fate (*αἱμόρραντον…/ξείνων † αἱμάσσουσ' ἄταν βωμούς, †, I.T.* 226-227) and when her brother arrives she is also very close to serving him the lustral rites before his death.

Iphigenia, in a state of wilderness, is an untamed maiden who, metaphorically, hunts, captures, and kills men as part of her obligations to the worship of the goddess Artemis.[377] She observes the victims of Artemis trapped in the nets of abhorrent sacrifices, their blood soaking the temple. The image recalls, again, that of her mother

[377] Swift (2010, 197).

Clytemnestra, when she is sprayed with the spouting blood of Agamemnon. But when Orestes' identity is revealed, Iphigenia is determined to sprinkle holy water around his head, but not as a consecration – the purification of Orestes is a part of mock ritual which leads them to salvation, not his death.

Ironically, Iphigenia's deceitful plan includes some elements of truth. The matricide of one of the strangers, the rituals at the seashore, the necessity for purification, and the dangers of pollution, are believable aspects of purification, which can be shown to be true. Nevertheless, the whole truth is hidden behind Iphigenia's intelligence, which constructs the deceitful plan, the crucial basis of which is the purification both of the strangers and of the statues of Artemis, which the strangers touch with their miasmatic hands.

The purifying power of the flowing stream or the water of the sea that 'washes every human evil away' (*θάλασσα κλύζει πάντα τἀνθρώπων κακά, I.T.* 1193) reflects the outstanding role of the sea as a sacred, pure environment that erases human impurities. Instead of 'washing off the tainted blood with blood' (*ὡς φόνῳ φόνον/ μυσαρὸν ἐκνίψω, I.T.* 1224-1225), as Iphigenia wishes in pretence before the departure of the ritual procession to the shore where the mock ritual is going to take place, through the sea-journey she cleanses the evils that have destroyed her family's happiness.

The ritual cleansing of the sky-fallen statue leads to the purification of Orestes and his final vindication. The desolation of Artemis' temple in Tauris puts an end to the abhorrent sacrifices of Greek visitors. Iphigenia holds the divine *xoanon* in her arms, in the same way in which Artemis rescues the young maiden at Aulis, revealing a more civilized aspect of the goddess. The statue of Artemis is transformed from an abhorrent image of bloodthirsty goddess into a benevolent symbol of salvation and freedom.

Orestes follows the ordeals made by Apollo, and Iphigenia obeys her brother's desire to fly faraway from the Tauric land, accompanied by their relative Pylades, and the statue returns to Greece.

The soulless statue and the suffering Orestes, embarking on the ship and traveling over the sea, undergo a kind of morally transformative cleansing: Artemis from the negative and chthonic aspects of her cult, and Orestes from the moral guilt of his matricide. The oars of the ship, beating the salty sea, spray them with sprinkles of water and the blood, both symbolically and literally, is finally cleansed.

3.4 Euripides' *Helen*

3.4.1 Introduction - Pursuing Victories in Exotic Lands

The construction of the Athenian imperial hegemony in the fifth century BC, based on political, geographical, and economical allegiances, alliances or interdependences, generated the utopic illusion of a new Pan-Hellenic supremacy able to conquer barbaric enemies and to land, victoriously, in remote and exotic territories. From the barren cliffs of Scythia and the Crimean Chersonese, to the vast seascape of Mediterranean and the fertile valleys of the Nile, the Greek tragedians create, on the theatrical stage, and through the audience's imagination, a poetic universe, which reflects historic events, colonization expeditions, and evolutionary journeys to unknown regions.

The ability of ancient Greek tragedy to traverse, through the spatial dynamics of the dramatic plot, these mythical faraway landscapes through defined scenic, offstage or distanced spaces, encourages the audience to look, whether literally or metaphorically, not only at images of the 'elsewhere', but also to recall the significance of the 'gulf' that separates these geographical remote worlds: the sea, the main pathway that drives them to lands of mystery and adventure.[378]

What emerges from the apparent mythical narrations and the socio-political, religious, and cultural implications of Greek tragedy is the notion of a dualistic universe surrounding the lives of mortals, determining their destiny. This dualism is expressed in its most prevalent way, and through multiple aspects of dubiousness, in Euripides' *Helen.*

[378] For the spatial categories of the theatrical space see Rehm (2002, 20-25).

In this chapter, after a brief introduction, I will focus my attention on the dramatic function of travelling in Euripides' *Helen*, especially in relation to the sea as a means of arrivals and departures, which set in motion the evolution of the plot. In the first section, I intend to show the dramatic role of islands as spaces, which are inextricably connected with the characters' identities, lives, and destinies. Then, I will explore how, the two Greek heroes of the Trojan expedition, Teucer and Menelaus, following different sea routes as wanderer sailors, arrive on stage, providing with their presence the hope of relief from their sufferings. Section 3.4.1.3 is concerned with the tomb of Peleus as an imaginary space of protection. The fourth section of this analysis examines how the sacred escorts of Helen's return voyage to Greece foreshadows her glorious destiny, while the last section focuses on the mock sea rituals, both in Euripides' *Helen* and *Iphigenia in Tauris* as part of the plan for heroines' escape from their 'barbaric exile'.

First staged in 412 BC, eight years before the end of the Peloponnesian War and only a few months after the destructive defeat of the Athenian military expedition to Sicily, Euripides' *Helen* is a story of dichotomies, reunions, and reconstructions of the past. The events which unfold reveal the catastrophic futility of the war and highlight the discrepancy between reality and appearance. Seventeen years after the beginning of the Trojan War, the shipwrecked Menelaus confronts Helen in Egypt while she is fleeing to the tomb of the king Proteus, which functions throughout the play as a secure space of supplication, able to protect Helen from Theoclymenus' erotic advances. Helen's true identity is revealed when her replica, dragged violently from the shores of Troy and onto the Greek ships, had disappeared into the mist of non-existence. Menelaus and Helen, the couple supposedly guilty of the destructions and losses of the Trojan War, are transformed into innocent victims of divine quarrels and malice,

justifying once again the limitations of mortals, whose sufferings and rewards are determined by the whimsical motivations of the gods.

In order to mediate between the two contradictory images of Helen – the loyal and domestic Spartan queen and the daemonic and detested Helen of Troy – Euripides transports Helen to a neutral territory in order to negotiate her reputation and her destiny.[379] In Euripides' creative fantasy, Egypt functions as the most appropriate theatrical setting, for the conjugal union, a location which 'mediating' Greece and Troy, truth and illusion, life and death. The marvelous branches of the river Nile and the sun-warming plains of Egypt provide a space of continuous transformation. The flooding of streams and the restless sea are, for the Greeks, the natural and emblematic characteristics of a land, which lurks behind its exotic and romantic image, a space of displacement, enslavement and death.

Although Egypt and its inhabitants is mentioned by the Greek tragedians in their works, Euripides' *Helen* is the only extant example of an ancient Greek tragedy with an Egyptian setting.[380] In a tableau of supplication at the tomb of the dead pharaoh Proteus, Helen provides the opening prologue, describing, from the very first lines of the play, an oriental environment:

Νείλου μὲν αἵδε καλλιπάρθενοι ῥοαί,

ὃς ἀντὶ δίας ψακάδος Αἰγύπτου πέδον

λευκῆς τακείσης χιόνος ὑγραίνει γύας

[379] Austin (1994, 145) observes that 'Egypt still remains essential to the revision as the mediating point' between the Spartan and the Trojan Helen.

[380] In Aeschylus *Suppliant Women* the shores of Egypt is the departure point of the Danaids' pursuit by their cousins, the sons of Aegyptus. Euripides' satyr play *Busiris* is presumably set on the African continent (frs. 312-315 Kannicht). Allan (2008, 29, n.136) notes that Egypt is likely to have been the location of Aeschylus' satyr-play Proteus (frs. 210-215 Radt). Sommerstein claims that *The Egyptians* was set there.

These are the lovely streams of Nile,

which waters the plain of Egypt and its fields not with Zeus's rain,

but with melted white snow.

(*Helen* 1-3)

The abundant waters in Helen's idyllic description echo the endless mobility of the protagonists' constant reversals of fortune. Egypt also offers an open field of hunting and persecution. The image of the lascivious Egyptians threatening Greek chastity conceptualizes the ethnic 'other' as primitive, subhuman and monstrous.[381] These aspects of Egyptian's identity correspond closely with the hunting metaphors commonly used throughout the play. The ethnic interaction is portrayed as a hunting game in which hunters and untamed 'animals' struggle for harmless cohabitation, dominance, and survival. We should not underestimate the importance played by the yoke of sexual union, another prominent hunting motif, in Euripides' *Helen*, as the motivation for all journeys, whether short or long, futile or profitable, simple or geographically complex, a union which finds its final resolution in Egypt. Although in a far-flung territory, the erotic union between the Hellene Helen and the barbarian Theoclymenus is finally avoided, offering to the Greek audience a 'happy ending'. In the centre of the Athenian democratic *polis*, Euripides presents once again, as a background of his tragedy, a barbaric locus, providing his audience with thought-provoking issues concerning imperialistic strategies, ethnocentric beliefs and socio-cultural prejudices.

[381] Hall (1989, 50-51).

In 412 BC, the Sicilian disaster deprived the Athenians not only of their naval supremacy but also of their ambitious expansionism. Athens was a *polis* devastated by the war and death, and its citizens, desperate and exposed to the threat of a total defeat in the Peloponnesian War, sought to escape from their unbearable life. The imaginary world of the theatre provides the illusion of a journey that will lead to a more consoling reality; it offers the hope of restoration. The Egyptian setting of the play also recalls the catastrophic enterprise of the Athenian armada to Egypt in 460-454 BC, supporting the revolt in the Egyptian satrapy against the Persian Empire. Nevertheless, the citation of the Cyprian Salamis (*Helen*, 148), a historically successful campaign reflecting the once victorious battle of Salamis, conceals the vital desire to escape to a new reality and the necessity of a symbolic voyage that will transform the sorrows of the disaster into a glorious rebirth.

Extending the geographical boundaries of the world, the tragedy brings into view the mortals' capacity for skepticism toward the physical, spiritual and intellectual limits of their destiny. Although Zeus' decision 'to lighten mother Earth of her vast horde of mortals' (*ὡς ὄχλου βροτῶν/ πλήθους τε κουφίσειε μητέρα χθόνα Helen*, 39-40) exonerates human atrocities, the bleak aftermath of the war urges them to envisage escape-voyages at the edge of the earth. Confronting the malfunctions of overpopulation, the maritime colonization offers a more rational solution than the gods' ambivalent will, thus questioning the vindictive stance of divine morality.

3.4.1.1 The Imaginary Islands in Euripides' *Helen*

In the ancient mythical tradition, islands are frequently portrayed as landscapes of adventurous stopovers, protection and 'blessed' immortality. These pieces of land surrounded by water define the sea's pathways for mariners' navigation, and provide specific and visible points, which allow sailors to specify the exact position of their ships more accurately. It is interesting to note that the mythological associations of many natural landmarks of the Greek islands, with tombs and monuments near coastal promontories, imply a connection between these regions and immortality. Beacons, holy temples, towers and heroes' tombs transmute dangerous passages into warning signs of salvation. The ancient Greek word *σῆμα* was also used to describe these areas as specific points able to be seen by sea navigators at day or night. Symbolically, the islands and the coastal promontories could be characterized as a *τέκμαρ*, a word defined variously as a boundary, an end or a fixed line of separation.[382] In the first section of this chapter I will explore how Euripides, in allusive and often subtle ways, directs his characters' wanderings in Euripides' *Helen*, focusing on coastal lands and islands as spaces, which are closely connected with their life and destiny.

Although the action of the play takes place on the Egyptian mainland in front of the palace of the king Theoclymenus, where the tomb of his father is located, in her prologue Helen, introducing the once mighty king Proteus, refers to the island of Pharos as a space of his residence:

Πρωτεὺς δ' ὅτ' ἔζη τῆσδε γῆς τύραννος ἦν,

[382] In Euripides' *Hecuba* (1273) the image of the promontory of Cynossema will be a sign (*τέκμαρ*) for the sailors. Nevertheless, the warning beacon on the summit of Cynossema is contradicted by the deceptive beacons of Nauplius, as described by Teucer in Euripides' *Helen* (1260).

Φάρον μὲν οἰκῶν νῆσον, Αἰγύπτου δ' ἄναξ

Proteus, while he lived, was ruler of this land

[and although inhabiting the island of Pharos, was lord of Egypt][383]

(*Helen* 4-5)

The island is mentioned only once during the play, but it may have been preserved in the audiences' memory as an emblem of a space inextricably associated with the authority of a benevolent Egyptian king. The visible setting of the tomb of Proteus and the continuous references to it, both as an effective memorial for Helen's protection and also as an arena of negotiations, is contradicted by the invisible island of Pharos, the centre of Proteus' authority while he lived.[384] Under the apparent simplicity of oppositions, we could suggest that on the stage the tomb of the dead pharaoh substitutes the powerful dynamic of the king when he was alive and ruled Egypt from the island of Pharos. The sacred sanctuary devoted to Proteus, with its overpowering influence, imposes the king's will and promises upon the characters of the play, even after his death. Like the island of Pharos, which stands guard at the mouth of the Nile delta, the tomb could be illustrated as an island in the centre of the theatrical stage, offering its protection to Helen's reputation until Menelaus can claim her back.[385]

[383] Pearson (1903) argues that there is no interpolation. Campell (1950, 59) supports that 'Dingelstad gave good reasons for regarding this line as a later insertion. So also Herwerden, following Klinkerberg' and he adds that 'it seems must unlikely that Euripides would have wished to suggest the Homeric scene, where Pharos is represented as a whole day's voyage – with a good wind – from the Egyptian coast'. Dale (1967, 70) observes that 'the detail seems to be added simply to come into line with Homer *Odyssey* 4.355. But in Homer, Peleus is the Old man of the Sea, though in Herodotus he has become a king'. For actors' interpolations in Greek tragedy see Page (1934).

[384] Pharos may have been the setting for the *Proteus* – the satyr play which concluded the *Oresteia*.

[385] Callimachus, a native poet of the Greek colony of Cyrene in Libya and a scholar at the library of Alexandria, identified Pharos as 'Helen's island' (SH 254-255). In Homer's *Odyssey* (4.351-570) Proteus is 'the old man of the sea' and a prophet who tends to his seals on the Pharos.

Perhaps a more likely aspect carrying particular significance for the role of the island Pharos as symbol of protection in Euripides' *Helen* is not its topographical location in a very close proximity to the shores of Egypt, controlling one of the many entrances to the Nile Delta, but its etymological derivation from the Greek word *φᾶρος,* a 'large piece of cloth', which could be suggested as another way to hide and guard Helen's chastity.[386] The truth about Helen's transportation to Egypt was initially concealed by Hermes who 'caught her up in folds of *aether*, veiled her in a cloud and, since Zeus had not forgotten her, set her down in Proteus' palace' (*λαβὼν δέ μ' Ἑρμῆς ἐν πτυχαῖσιν αἰθέρος/ νεφέλῃ καλύψας — οὐ γὰρ ἠμέλησέ μου/ Ζεύς — τόνδ' ἐς οἶκον Πρωτέως ἱδρύσατο, Helen* 44-46), where she remained a faithful and virtuous wife. Helen was trapped in Egypt, waiting for her husband Menelaus to make true the promises of the god Hermes that 'she shall live once more on Sparta's famous plains' with him (*τὸ κλεινὸν ἔτι κατοικήσειν πέδον/ Σπάρτης σὺν ἀνδρί, Helen* 57-58). But before her beloved husband arrives, another Greek sailor arrives on the shores of Egypt seeking advice in order to navigate a favourable course to his life's final destination, the island of Cyprus.

In Aeschylus' *Persians*, the chorus of the faithful elders recalls the glorious authority of the god-like king Darius and, singing the victories of their own past, relates the cities and islands which he captured. Among the great regions that bow to his mighty power are:

καὶ τὰς ἀγχιάλους

ἐκράτυνε μεσάκτους,

[386] In Hellenistic times the small island gave its name to one of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World, the Pharos of Alexandria, a great lighthouse, which was constructed by the Ptolemaic kingdom, years after the foundation of Alexandria by the Alexander the Great.

Λῆμνον, Ἰκάρου θ' ἕδος,

καὶ Ῥόδον ἠδὲ Κνίδον

Κυπρίας τε πόλεις, Πάφον,

ἠδὲ Σόλους, Σαλαμῖνά τε,

τᾶς νῦν ματρόπολις τῶνδ'

αἰτία στεναγμῶν

the sea-girt islands

between the coasts,

Lemnos and the Icaria,

Rhodes and Cnidos,

and the cities of Cyprus, Paphos,

Soloi and Salamis,

whose mother state is the cause of the lamentations now

(Aeschylus, *Persians* 888-896)

Aeschylus' *Persians* won the first prize in the dramatic competition in the Dionysia festival in 472 BC, glorifying the Greek victory in the straits of Salamis through the horrific destruction of the Persian army. When he mentioned the mother state Salamis and its Cypriot namesake he did not know that almost twenty years later, on the east coast of Cyprus, Athenians would achieve another stunning naval victory

against the Persian fleet.[387] Although the myth of Teucer's foundation of the new Salamis on the island of Cyprus is mentioned in Pindaric victory odes, it is in Euripides' *Helen* that the reference to Salamis would have evoked, for the Athenians who has just experienced the catastrophic defeat in Sicily, memories of a glorious past and the hope for a prosperous future.[388]

Teucer is another paradigm of a lone wandering hero travelling between the two Salamis. The new Salamis will ostensibly and symbolically offer him the illusion of homeland, but his eternal exile from his island of origin, 'old' Salamis, 'the fatherland that reared him' (*Σαλαμὶς δὲ πατρὶς ἡ θρέψασά με, Helen* 88), is the spring of his own misfortune. Although Teucer is one of the Greek heroes who stormed the citadels and sacked the city of Troy, 'he was finally destroyed himself in return' (*καὶ ξύν γε πέρσας αὐτὸς ἀνταπωλόμην, Helen* 106). His father Telamon accused him of not preventing the death of his brother Ajax, and banished him from his fatherland. Teucer is doomed to a life of exile. The destination of his sea voyage is one Salamis but not that of his native country, and his failure to achieve his desired homecoming forces him to an endless homesickness.

Nevertheless, the Cypriot Salamis could offer to him only the illusion of homeland, providing another example in the play which justifies the dual schema between appearance and reality. No further mention is made in the play about Teucer's adventures after his departure from Egypt. His desire to meet the prophetess Theonoe, daughter of Proteus and sister of the king Theoclymenus, in order to take her oracular advice regarding his impending voyage to the 'sea–rimmed Cyprus' (*ἐς γῆν ἐναλίαν Κύπρον, Helen* 148) where Apollo has confided him to settle on the new-Salamis, is

[387] Thucydides 1.112.2-4, Herodotus 5.108-15.
[388] Pindar's *Nem.* 4.46.

prevented by Helen. When she warns him about the eagerness of Theoclymenus to kill any Greek stranger he catches, Helen reassures him that 'the crossing itself will reveal its own course' (*πλοῦς, ὦ ξέν', αὐτὸς σημανεῖ, Helen* 151).

For Teucer, the Cypriot Salamis, like Ithaca, acts symbolically as the final destination of his wanderings. It is the idea of Ithaca that motivates humans to overpass the difficulties and the unexpected obstacles of life's journey in order to achieve their goals. This is the reason why Helen's wanderings could also be correlated with Cavafy's images of Ithaca. The interpretation of her words underscores the significance of the experience gained during Teucer's voyage. Teucer's sailing to Cyprus will give him all the answers. Salamis, a mirror city to his real homeland, is the space in which Teucer's wanderings will come to an end. Teucer, like his archetypal nostos-figure Odysseus, desires to reach his own 'Ithaca' even though it is not this nostalgia which motivates him to arrive to the shores of Cyprus. Obedient to divine will and exposed to the unpredictability of the natural phenomena, Teucer will find his own path into the sea and life. Arriving at his last destination he will have become wise and 'with so much experience' he 'will have understood, by then, what these Ithacas mean'.[389]

Helen follows her own passages of suffering in order to find a consoling restoration of her wanderings. Euripides' setting of Helen in Egypt as an innocent human victim of the gods' rivalry had been established by the lyric poet Stesichorus, and was also followed by Herodotus, who introduced the story claiming to have heard it from the Egyptian priests at Memphis.[390] Although Helen remains in Egypt, her name remains a potent evocation of Greeks and Trojans, deaths, tears and sorrow. The

[389] C.P. Cavafy wrote 'Ithaca' in 1911 inspired by the return journey of Odysseus to his home island as despicted in Homer's *Odyssey*. Translation by Daniel Mendelsohn in *Cavafy's Complete Poems* (2009).
[390] In Herodotus (2.112-120) account there is no mention of a phantom. For Stesichorus' *Palinode* see Page (1962, 104ff.) who introduces the fr. 26.1 contained in *P.Oxy* 2506 which inform us that Helen travelled to Egypt.

disjunction between Helen's name and her body evokes flashes of dramatic irony, which undoubtedly connected, in many cases, with the characterization of Euripides' *Helen*, a play 'so richly enjoyable'.[391] Teucer ignores, during his dialogue with Helen, the true identity of his interlocutor. Their mutual recognition remains unfulfilled. In his parting words, another discrepancy between vision and knowledge can be traced. Teucer aphoristically curses Helen to 'die a wretched death and never reach Eurotas' stream' (*κακῶς δ' ὄλοιτο μηδ' ἐπ' Εὐρώτα ῥοὰς/ ἔλθοι, Helen* 162-163) and in the very next line wishes her to 'have a good fortune forever' (*σὺ δ' εἴης εὐτυχὴς ἀεί, γύναι, Helen* 163).

In effecting her deceitful plan, the Spartan princess not only attempts to escape with her husband far away from the Egyptian land, but also, as the Dioscuri predict in their divine speech as *dei ex machina*, will finally reach the Laconian river. Furthermore, the Dioscuri ensure the immortality of their sister, telling her: 'When you reach the end of your life's course, you will be called goddess' (*ὅταν δὲ κάμψῃς καὶ τελευτήσῃς βίον/ θεὸς κεκλήσῃ, Helen* 1666-7). As vivid proof of her final incorporation into the Greek world, the Divine Twins reconcile the cult of Helen with an island near the east coast of Attica:

οὗ δ' ὥρισέν σοι πρῶτα Μαιάδος τόκος,

Σπάρτης ἀπάρας, τὸν κατ' οὐρανὸν δρόμον,

κλέψας δέμας σὸν μὴ Πάρις γήμειέ σε,

— φρουρὸν παρ' Ἀκτὴν τεταμένην νῆσον λέγω —

Ἑλένη τὸ λοιπὸν ἐν βροτοῖς κεκλήσεται,

[391] Morwood (2002, 56).

ἐπεὶ κλοπαίαν σ' ἐκ δόμων ἐδέξατο.

The place where Maia's son first brought you to anchor

in your journey through the heavens,

having lifted you off from Sparta and kidnapped you,

so Paris could not marry you –

I mean the island stretched out

like a guard along the coast of Attica –

will henceforth be called 'Helena' by mortals,

since it received you when you had been stolen from your home.

(*Helen*, 1670-1675)

Various aspects of tradition, which are dependent on local myths and cults, worship Helen as a goddess associated with islands. Helen's posthumous presence at significant geographic locations, and her correlation with islands, is a point which we will discuss further. Taking into concern the identification of many islands as spaces on which immortal heroes dwelled, and which were illustrated in ancient Greek world and cults as 'blessed', 'sacred' and remote regions of immortality, helps contextualise Euripides' version in *Helen*, where her posthumous reputation is achieved through divine restoration.

Euripides suggests that Helen is the innocent victim of a divine quarrel which causes the deaths of thousands of soldiers during the Trojan War. When the ethereal

phantom disappears to the heavens and Helen's true identity is revealed, the audience faces, in the most tragic and poetic way, the futility of the war as a feature of mortal reality. Vulnerable as pawns in a game of divine capriciousness or victims of their own arrogance, mortals, as tragic heroes of their own lives, could understand how 'so much suffering, so much life, went into the abyss all for an empty tunic, all for a Helen'.[392] Nevertheless, Euripides leads his plot to a happy ending by rewarding the virtuous and the faithful 'real' Helen, exalting her to the heavens of immortality after her death. Euripides goes a step further, even giving to an islet near the temple of Poseidon at Sounion Helen's notorious name.

The long low rocky island near Sounion is recorded by Strabo as the promontory where Helen and Paris rested, and first made love, after their departure from Sparta.[393] Hecateus of Miletus, on the other hand, had said that 'Helena' is the island where Helen disembarked on her return of Troy.[394] This story is also indicated by Pausanias in his *Descriptions of Greece*.[395] Euripides invents a new interpretation about the correlation between the island 'Helena' and Helen. In his version, the ridged hill into the sea near Attica becomes the stopover in Hermes' long flight when he conveys the real Helen through the sky from Sparta to the banks of the Nile. The island 'Helena', geographically, is neither a far-flung space like the analogous remote 'blessed' regions of immortal heroes, nor could it be regarded as a grave (*σῆμα*) like Hecuba's tomb at the Cynossema promontory. Nevertheless, the topographical position of the island could function as a symbolic gate en-route to the shores of Attica. In connection with this, it may be relevant to mention the fortification of Cape Sounion in 412 BC in order to

[392] The closing lines of Seferis' poem 'Helen' written in 1953 during his first visit to the island of Cyprus.
[393] Strabo (9.122), as cited in Burian (2007, 292), preserves the tradition, based on the identification of this islet with the island called Cranae in Homer *Il*. 3.443-5.
[394] Hecateus (FGrHist 1.F. 128).
[395] Pausanias (1.35.1-2).

control and secure the ships bringing supplies to Athens during the Peloponnesian War and to provide protection against the Spartan attacks.[396]

The goddess Helen, with her ambiguous nature, perhaps exhibits a daemonic presence as the controller of the gates and a guardian of the sea road to Athens, just as Hecuba and Hecate could play an important role as saviour or menacing power, respectively.[397] Helen is not a heroine and it is tempting to question whether her possible afterlife apparitions are portrayals of her 'true' chaste image or of her phantom-copy. Both of her natures undergo a kind of divine protection, and a miraculous exodus; a kind of glorious escape from the world of mortals leaving her name as a memorial of her enigmatic life.

According to Pausanias, Helen was also worshipped on the island of Rhodes as Helen *Dendritis,* a goddess of the tree and vegetation.[398] Pausanias describes the story that leads her to Rhodes and how Polyxo takes revenge for the death of her husband Tleptolemus at Troy by sending her handmaidens disguised as Furies, who abduct Helen while she is bathing and hang her from a tree.[399] These descriptions could be associated with the prominent motifs of mythical abductions and violent rapes in Euripides' *Helen*, as well as with Leda's death by hanging as a result of Helen's shameful fame.

Pausanias also describes Helen's posthumous fate and affair with Achilles on the blessed island of Leuke in the remote Black Sea.[400] The war has ended and Achilles is dead for the sake of Helen's phantom. Although in Euripides' *Hecuba*, Achilles asks for

[396] Thucydides (7.28).
[397] For the divine nature of Helen as goddess see Holmberg (1995, 24-25). For Hecuba's association with Hecate see Burnett (1994, 155-156).
[398] Pausanias (3.19.9-10).
[399] Pausanias (3.19.9-10). For the Rhodians' local cults and traditions see Higbie (2003, 218).
[400] Pausanias (3.19.11-13).

Polyxena as a gift of honour (*geras*), in Pausanias' story he is awarded with the woman that causes his own death. The two main protagonists of the Trojan expedition inhabit a barbaric island far away from their homelands. The Euripidean Helen, concealed under her anonymity, admits during her brief conversation with Teucer that she has heard that Achilles 'once went to vie for Helen's hand' (*μνηστήρ ποθ' Ἑλένης ἦλθεν, ὡς ἀκούομεν, Helen* 99). Their presumptive affair is also underscored by Hesiod who mentions that 'if Achilles had been old enough to compete for her, he would have won'.[401]

Many Greek heroes of the Trojan expedition posthumously acquire a quasi-divine state and inhabit islands in remote regions.[402] In the mythical and local traditions these 'blessed' heroes haunt inaccessible, mythical or fantastic landscapes at the edges of the known world. In Euripides' *Helen,* the Dioscuri prophesy the final destination of the shipwrecked sailor Menelaus, saying that 'by the will of the gods, it will be the wandering Menelaus' lot to settle on the Island of Blessed' (*καὶ τῷ πλανήτῃ Μενέλεῳ θεῶν πάρα/ μακάρων κατοικεῖν νῆσόν ἐστι μόρσιμον, Helen* 1676-7). Menelaus is finally blessed and rests into a paradise realm as an immortal islander.

These islands, whether real or illusionary, acquire, in Euripides' *Helen*, not only a significant dynamic as part of heroes' wanderings but an autonomous power able to reflect a range of symbols and interpretations. As parts of the land thrown out into the vastness of the sea, the islands acquire their own mythical value as part of sailors' adventures over the waves.

[401] Hesiod (Frag. 204.87-93 MW).
[402] Austin (1994, 26).

3.4.1.2 The Wanderer Sailors

In those ancient Greek tragedies, which are thematically connected with the events of the Greek expedition to Troy and its aftermath, the return voyage of the Greek army is described as a passage through disastrous weather conditions, meted out on the Greeks in acts of divine vengeance. During their wanderings, shipwrecked sailors confront the vindictive mood of the gods, or struggle for survival on remote shores inhabited by hostile locals.

In Euripides' *Trojan Women*, the insulted Athena asks for the aid of Poseidon, with whom she organizes the destruction of the homeward-bound Greek ships. The Aegean is transformed into an aqueous grave for the Greek sailors, which reflects the poetic image of the tossed and drenched corpses of the Persians, 'flowering' the sea under the radiant light of the sun in Aeschylus' *Persians*.[403] Whether winners or losers, mortals pay the price for their arrogance, either doomed to death or struggling for their survival in a sea of misfortunes.

In Euripides' *Helen*, seventeen years (*Helen* 112, 114, 775-6) after the day when the city of Troy was laid waste, two Greek sailors, who fought together at the citadels of Troy, one after the other, arrive on the shores of Egypt, although they have never encountered each other. Teucer and Menelaus follow different sea routes, and their sea wanderings are enforced by different motives. They are both wretched, and exposed to the unpredictability of their journeys. They arrive on stage searching for help, and though they initially feel dismayed at the sight of Helen, they finally accept her guidance concerning the best possible way of reaching their goals.[404] Although Teucer recognizes the resemblance between his interlocutor and the Helen of Troy, he is

[403] Euripides' *Trojan Women* 88-91; Aeschylus' *Persians* 272-277, 658-660.
[404] Allan (2008, 27).

ultimately unable to distinguish between sight and knowledge. The credulous Teceur, until his departure from Egypt, is fooled not by Helen's replica, but by the real one. He is content with Helen's ambiguous advice about his final destination, and he never meets the noble maiden Theonoe, who is privileged to know 'everything [which] concerns the gods, what is and is yet to be' (*τὰ θεῖα γὰρ/ τά τ' ὄντα καὶ μέλλοντα πάντ' ἠπίστατο, Helen* 13-14).

Teucer's vessel is temporarily anchored near the Egyptian shores. The son of Telamon is on his way to the island of Cyprus in order to 'fulfill Apollo's prophecies that he will be the founder of a new Salamis in honour of his fatherland' (*οὗ μ' ἐθέσπισεν/ οἰκεῖν Ἀπόλλων, ὄνομα νησιωτικὸν/ Σαλαμῖνα θέμενον τῆς ἐκεῖ χάριν πάτρας, Helen* 148-150). Responding to Helen's consecutive and agonized questions about the war, its consequences, and the destiny of her husband Menelaus, Teucer testifies to her that, although the Argives sailed together, 'a stormy weather divided them, in different directions' (*ἀλλὰ χειμὼν ἄλλοσ' ἄλλον ὥρισεν, Helen* 128) 'as they were crossing the mid-point of the Aegean Sea' (*μέσον περῶσι πέλαγος Αἰγαίου πόρου, Helen* 130). The crucial point of their dialogue is when Teucer says that no one knows if Menelaus reached any shore and that 'the rumours in Greece say that he died' (*θανὼν δὲ κλῄζεται καθ' Ἑλλάδα, Helen* 132), evoking in Helen feelings of desperation and sorrow.

Teucer, as a survivor of the Trojan War and the Greek fleet's decimation at sea, returns to his homeland without his brother Ajax who ended his life by throwing himself on his own sword (*οἰκεῖον αὐτὸν ὤλεσ' ἅλμ' ἐπὶ ξίφος, Helen* 96).[405] Rejected

[405] Euripides uses the word *ἅλμα* (leap) portraying the possible demoralization of Ajax and his eschatological *katabasis* (descent) from life to Hades. This kind of death offers an image of escape, but not as that of a bird flying through the sky to salvation, but as a personal decision which, literally and metaphorically, leads the life of a mortal hero to an un-heroic finale. Another reference to suicide is included in Menelaus' threats against Theonoe, if she were to reject his proposal to help the Greek royal couple's escape. Also, the recurrent references to Leda's suicide and the rumoured suicide of Dioscuri evoke emotions of guilt and pain in Helen. Death by sword is the ultimate act of taming the animals that

by his own father, who accused him of being responsible for Ajax's fatal destiny, Teucer is sentenced to an endless exile. He arrives in Egypt, as a 'pre-echo' of Menelaus, reporting the rumours about his death, although they will be prove to be false.[406]

Although it is believed that Menelaus has disappeared into the deep sea, he unexpectedly appears on the theatrical stage, thus proving his existence. A messenger who narrates his wanderings declares that he, like Teucer, is among those who 'happily escaped from the sea and brought back home the names of the dead' (*τοὺς δ' ἐκ θαλάσσης ἀσμένους πεφευγότας/ νεκρῶν φέροντας ὀνόματ' εἰς οἴκους πάλιν, Helen* 398-9). But Menelaus, unlike Teucer, is not only an agent of misfortunes and death, but also the messenger of his own salvation.[407] The dichotomy between names and bodies also enforces the discrepancy between appearance and reality.[408]

Teucer's suit of armour conceals his symbolically naked status as a forever-exiled hero, without country, family, and friends. By contrast, Menelaus enters in rags. The sea has seized 'the robes he had before, his splendid cloaks, and all his fine garments' (*πέπλους δὲ τοὺς πρὶν λαμπρά τ' ἀμφιβλήματα/ χλιδάς τε πόντος ἥρπασ', Helen* 424-5). He arrives shipwrecked and helpless in an unknown land accompanied by the

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kick against any kind of subjugation. The tragic heroes, by refusing to submit to an unwilling destiny, choose death instead of life and become, simultaneously, both hunters and the victims in their desperate acts.

[406] The term is mentioned by Mastronarde, as cited in Allan (2008, 27).

[407] The image of the voyagers' salvation and return to their homelands after a shipwreck recalls Pylades' mission to inform the royal family of Argos about the salvation of Iphigenia by Artemis and her existence in the distant land of the Taurians. The difference is that Pylades, if he happily escapes from the dangers of the sea, will bring back home the name of the living Iphigenia and not a list of names who dwell in the houses of Hades.

[408] As Burian observes, the thought concerning the survivors who return home with the names of the dead resembles that of the Messenger in Aeschylus' *Agamemnon*, who wonders: 'if any of them still draw the breath of life, they speak of us as lost—and why should they not? We think the same of them. But may all turn out for the best' (*καὶ νῦν ἐκείνων εἴ τίς ἐστιν ἐμπνέων/ λέγουσιν ἡμᾶς ὡς ὀλωλότας, τί μή;/ ἡμεῖς τ' ἐκείνους ταὔτ' ἔχειν δοξάζομεν./ γένοιτο δ' ὡς ἄριστα,* 671-4).

shameful phantom of his wife Helen and her companions who keep watch over her in the deep recesses of a cave, and who will play a dominant role in their final escape.[409]

Visually, Menelaus' rags depict another on-stage 'image' of the sea and its destructive power. The corrosive dynamic of his long wanderings at sea is reflected through his appearance. The once mighty Greek commander enters semi-naked, wrapped in tattered sailcloth salvaged from his damaged ship. He could also be imagined as a shipwrecked ship, seeking restoration in order to be ready for a new voyage and hence a new life and adventures. The garments of the castaway Menelaus initially act as a symbol of his lost status.[410] However, after their mutual recognition, Helen and Menelaus devise an escape-plan in which their clothes will 'play' a supportive role as means of deception. The successfulness of the plan is symbolically foreshadowed when Theoclymenus orders new clothes for the unknown sailor as a reward for his excellent news (*ἀντὶ τῆς ἀχλαινίας/ ἐσθῆτα λήψῃ σῖτά θ', Helen* 1282-3). When Helen enters from the palace wearing 'black robes instead of white' (*πέπλων τε λευκῶν μέλανας ἀνταλλάξομαι, Helen* 1088) as a token of her feigned grief, she informs the audience that Menelaus wears the armour that 'was supposed to (have been) cast into the sea' (*ἃ γὰρ καθήσειν ὅπλ' ἔμελλεν εἰς ἅλα, Helen* 1375). Menelaus' new garments, covering his naked body, exposed to danger, empower him and restore his lost hope for salvation.[411]

The ancient Greek words *πλάνη* and *πλάνησις* could be interpreted either to mean an act of wandering or a state of deceit. We could also suggest that somebody's

[409] In the dramatic narration about his wanderings, Menelaus present himself as a 'wretched and lone survivor whose all companions are lost' (*καὶ νῦν τάλας ναυαγὸς ἀπολέσας φίλους, Helen* 408), emphasizing his heroic attitude and the magnitude of his calamity. Nevertheless, in the same speech he admits that his 'companions who have survived' (*περιλελειμμένους/ φίλων, Helen* 426-7) keep a close watch on his wife.

[410] Burian (2007, 213).

[411] The tattered appearance of Menelaus recalls the 'naked' return of Xerxes in Persia, in Aeschylus' *Persians* (834-36, 846-48).

wanderings is the consequence of their deceit. Therefore, the characterization of Menelaus as the one who has been involved in 'much wandering' (*πολυπλανὴς, Helen* 203) could also identify him as somebody who has been fooled. Menelaus pursues the replica of Helen, having toiled for years in order to 'drag her by her hair' (*αὐτὴν ἦγ' ἐπισπάσας κόμης, Helen* 116) into his ship, and though 'he wanders this way and that and has sailed countless passages, sorely tried by his rovings' with her (*πορθμοὺς δ' ἁλᾶσθαι μυρίους πεπλωκότα/ ἐκεῖσε κἀκεῖσ' οὐδ' ἀγύμναστον πλάνοις, Helen* 532-3), he finally realizes that his long-suffering adventures were futile.[412] In Euripides' *Helen*, Menelaus, in fact, is a mortal who has deceived not by his loyal wife but by an ethereal illusion constructed by Hera and fashioned out of the 'upper air' (*εἴδωλον ἔμπνουν οὐρανοῦ, Helen* 34).[413] The phantom of Helen escapes from the cave, in which she was guarded, and flies, like a bird, disappearing into the cloudy sky. In fact, this 'cloudy' image (Helen, 707, 750, 1219) of another wanderer returning to the realm of its origin, symbolically foreshadows another kind of homeward journey, the 'true' Helen's final return and posthumous apotheosis.

I suggest that, in Euripides' *Helen*, the contrast between illusion and reality, divinity and mortality, freedom and suffering, was visualized through the realms of sky and sea respectively. The pathways of heavens function as spaces which lead mortals to the worlds of fantasy and remoteness. Divine powers abduct and transport their protected 'victims' through the sky, into a state of disappearance and illusion. Trapped or enslaved in hostile harbours, the heroes realize that the sea offers the only possible

[412] The words *πλάνον* and *πλανήτηι* are also applied to Menelaus at 774 and 1676 respectively.
[413] According to Dodds on *Bacchae* 292-4, as cited in Allan (2008, 212), *aether* 'is the stuff of which the stars and the sky are made'. The transformation of the Dioscuri into constellations, as well as Helen's double image fashioned by the *aether*, provide another symbol of the posthumous divine status of Helen, and her ability to be transformed.

way of escape, salvation and homeward passage, painting a picture of a watery road, which leads to reality.

In ancient Greek tragedy, the chorus often expresses such fantasies of escape via the sky, a route precluded by the limits of mortal ability. The lyric odes in Euripides' *Helen*, as an expression of the chorus's illusive perspectives, underscore the contrast between the harsh realities on earth and the ability of ether to provide the medium of desired escape. The enslaved women of the chorus are daughters of Greece. Their presence 'beside the dark blue water' (*κυανοειδὲς ἀμφ' ὕδωρ, Helen* 179) before entering on stage implies the prominent role of the sea as a space of their everyday activities, and indicates their liminal status as abducted women whose bodies inhabit a barbaric land while their minds dream of their homeland.

These women are 'prey of a foreign oar' (*θήραμα βαρβάρου πλάτας, Helen* 191) in Helen's words. Similarly the chorus, in the first *stasimon*, while singing the sorrows of Helen, refers to her fatal bridegroom Paris who 'ran on foreign oar over the foaming surge' (*ὅτ' ἔδραμε ῥόθια πεδία βαρβάρῳ πλάτᾳ, Helen* 1117), bringing the Spartan princess to Troy.[414] Paris is described as a sailor whose wooden barbaric oar trapped and tamed a Greek woman, dooming her to be the bane of both Trojans and Greeks. The timbers of the pine trees, used in the construction of the ships and oars, are again here described as a means of subjugation and initiators of destruction.[415] Paris, like Theoclymenus, is the masculine hunter who wants to impose the yoke of marriage over a woman who 'belongs' to somebody else. However, Helen wants to keep her marriage 'safe from harm' (*διασῴσῃ λέχη*, Helen 65). Expressing her moral virtues and her devotion to Menelaus, she says: 'the only anchor that held my fortune fast, is that my

[414] Paris is also identified as a fatal bridegroom in Aeschylus' *Agamemnon* (713).
[415] Homer (Il. 5.62-3), Euripides' *Hecuba* (631-5).

husband would come one day and rescue me from these evils' (*ἄγκυρα δ' ἥ μου τὰς τύχας ὄχει μόνη/ πόσιν ποθ' ἥξειν καί μ' ἀπαλλάξειν κακῶν, Helen* 277-8).

This is not the only time in which the anchor, as a mean of salvation, is mentioned in the play. One of the rowers aboard the fifty-oared Sidonian galley sent for Menelaus's mock funeral, escapes from death after the massacre of his companions by Greek sailors. As the second Messenger of the play, in the last lines of his speech, this Egyptian sailor explains how he saved himself, letting himself down into the sea 'alongside the anchor' (*εἰς ἄλ' ἄγκυραν πάρα, Helen 1614*). His supposed drowning, a kind of deceit, like that of Menelaus, offers him the gift of life. The anonymous oarsman is another paradigm of those who, 'happily escaped' from the perils of the sea, returns home with the names of dead.

While sailing with their ships, both Paris and Menelaus are misled into thinking that they hold in their palaces the real Helen.[416] The two generals become naval commanders with troubled and costly lives, not only due to a long period of war, but also long periods of voyages at sea. That their journeys revolve around the bogus image of Helen, whose name evokes destruction and human loss, reveals the futility of their efforts.

For seven years after his departure from the shores of Troy, Menelaus withstands the adversities of navigating the sea, the hostile and deserted lands of Libya and Crete, the shipwrecks in the Aegean, and Nauplius' beacons on Euboea (*Helen*, 766-768). The subsequent destruction of Menelaus' fleet and the death of many of his companions, as far as his own salvation, may have evoked in the audience memories of their own 'blessed' returns and a nostalgic melancholy for those who were lost in battle,

[416] Allan (2008, 266).

or were drowned at sea. Vessels became the grave of many sailors and, conversely, the visual representation of Proteus' tomb could have functioned not only as a memorial space, reflecting the mythical associations between the king of Egypt and the 'old man of the sea', but furthermore as a boat that would lead the two protagonists to either salvation or death.[417]

3.4.1.3 The Tomb of Proteus the islander

Proteus, the mortal king of Egypt, as Euripides informs his audience in the very first lines of *Helen*, ruled Egypt from the small island of Pharos. The 'islander' Proteus, after his death, was 'engulfed' into the Egyptian mainland, where a tomb was constructed. His monument functions not only as the most appropriate site of supplication during the play, but also acts as a constant reminder of the virtuous and moral king whose influence is preserved among the living after his death.

The Egyptian setting in Euripides' *Helen* consists of Theoclymenus' palace and the tomb of his father in front of it. Nowhere on stage is there a sacred temple, or a statue devoted to any Greek or Egyptian god. For the desperate Helen who fears and has to avoid the advances of Theoclymenus, the tomb of Proteus, who guards her moral right to be loyal to the absent Menelaus, is the space which 'protects her just like the gods' own temples' (*ἐρρύεθ' ἡμᾶς τοῦτ' ἴσον ναοῖς θεῶν, Helen* 801). As Burian observes, there are many other examples in ancient Greek tragedy that provide the

[417] Burian (2007, 243) observes that the simile of the tomb as the surface of the sea is emphasized through the repeated phrase 'on the tomb's surface' (*τύμβου 'πὶ νώτῳ, Helen* 842 and 984), and follows Kannicht's suggestion that this is probably derived from the Homeric phrase 'upon the sea's back' (*ἐν νώτοισι ποντίας ἁλός, Helen* 129, 774). I offer some reflections on the particular ubiquitous influence of Proteus' tomb in the next part of this chapter.

equation of tomb and altar.[418] But the tomb of the Egyptian ruler, in Euripides' *Helen* is the only space which is haunted by the mythological associations of Proteus as a 'miraculous and divine personage, a wizard of the sea'.[419]

Proteus's tomb is the most protective space for Helen's supplication, because Theoclymenus respects his father's will, meaning that the tomb, as a sacred monument, will not be vandalized by any sacrilegious intervention. For Theoclymenus, even though Egypt is a space of hunting, both literally and metaphorically, his father's tomb functions as an *abaton*; an inaccessible sacred space in which hunting is forbidden. Hence Proteus, an absent, invisible figure, imposes a protective power over the supplicant Helen and also a moral code to be respected by those powers who would otherwise extend their revengeful persecution to the refuge. As I mentioned in a previous chapter, these sanctuaries and altars are symbolically equivalent to islands and harbours, which offer to hopeless wanderers a consoling asylum, before their glorious escapes and salvations via the sea.

Both the true Helen and her capricious double are trapped in controlled spaces, which offer no obvious possibilities for escape. Both the tomb of Proteus, and the depths of the cave, where Menelaus sends the phantom of Helen to be guarded by his companions, are locations of captivity. The two spaces serve to emphasize the prominent motif of hunting and of 'the yoke' during the play. Nevertheless, the real Helen is unable to escape miraculously into the sky as is her ethereal image, but nonetheless her notional and emotional abilities devise the plan which leads her to freedom.

[418] Burian (2007, 240-1). Aeschylus' *Choephore* 106, 336-7 Sophocles' *Ajax* 1171-81, Euripides' *Alc*estes 995-1003.
[419] Verrall (1905, 75).

Helen transforms the tomb of Proteus into a theatrical stage, which acquires multiple functions during her 'performance' in order to realize her goals. Her scheme to remain loyal to her husband during his absence and then to organize, in the manner of a skilful theatrical director, her grand finale and exodus from the Egyptian land, relies on the potency of Proteus' tomb as a space of protection. The tomb symbolically mirrors the island of Pharos, manifesting the emblematic authority of the dead king upon his descendants. Hence it could be interpreted as a space of salvation from the perilous and bleak waters of the sea, for those desperately shipwrecked on the shores of life. It is also the place of Helen's bed of straw, providing her with the only alternative to the bed of the lustful Theoclymenus. Menelaus and Helen threaten to pollute the polished stones of Proteus' grave with 'streams of blood' (*ἵν' αἵματος ῥοαὶ/ τάφου καταστάζωσι, Helen* 984-5), proving that a threat of 'undying torment' (*ἀθάνατον ἄλγος σοί, Helen* 987) is the most effective way of manipulating Proteus's daughter, Theonoe.

The image recalls the Danaids, in Aeschylus' *Suppliant Women*, who threaten to hang themselves from the statues of the gods on the shores of Argos.[420] Another example is the threat Orestes makes against Apollo at the god's sanctuary at Delphi, threatening to commit pollution by death through starving.[421] The tomb of Proteus is exposed to the possibility of desecration by those who would take advantage of its protective aura. The audience faces the possibility that the tomb will not be the point of Helen's departure to the sea and salvation, but a host for two more corpses. The tomb could also be imagined as a vessel in the harbour, waiting for departure. Menelaus and Helen are ready to confront their destiny, either embarking on the boat which transfers

[420] Aeschylus' *Suppliant Women* 981-7.
[421] Euripides' *Iphigenia in Tauris* 973-5.

them to the Underworld if their plan will be not succeeded, or sailing to salvation if their expectations are to be fulfilled.

3.4.1.4 The Traveller Gods

The image of Helen on her ship resembles that of Artemis returning on the Greek ship from the shores of Tauris. Helen's divine status in her afterlife, prophesied by her Twin brothers the Dioscuri at the end of the play, emphatically justifies her image as a goddess. Lamenting the sorrows caused by her beauty, she wishes to have the ability to 'erase her face like the paint off a beautiful statue and then have taken a meaner form in place of this beautiful one' (*εἴθ' ἐξαλειφθεῖσ' ὡς ἄγαλμ' αὖθις πάλιν/ αἴσχιον εἶδος ἔλαβον ἀντὶ τοῦ καλοῦ, Helen* 262-3).[422] Acting like an artist, or a god, Helen wants to create a new 'chaste' image instead of the 'evil' one.[423] Her self-identification as a statue generates another distinctive example of the multiple layers of appearance within the play, between the world of art and the world of reality.[424]

It could be suggested that 'the unfavourable breezes never filled [Menelaus's] sails to let him reach his fatherland' (*χὥταν ἐγγὺς ᾖ πάτρας/ πάλιν μ' ἀπωθεῖ πνεῦμα, κοὔποτ' οὔριον/ ἐσῆλθε λαῖφος ὥστε μ' ἐς πάτραν μολεῖν, Helen* 405-407) because he traveled with the phantom Helen on board his ship. His destiny leads him to Egypt in order to meet his real wife and, in accordance with the chorus' desires divine will, return with her to Greece. In the *stasimon,* which evokes the catastrophic consequences

[422] The word is used again when the Greek servant reports the disappearance of Helen's phantom, and asks Menelaus whether the Greeks struggled in vain for an 'image of cloud' (*νεφέλης ἄγαλμ', Helen* 705, 1219). Similarly, the Dioscuri are described as 'twin-born glory of their fatherland' (*διδυμογενὲς ἄγαλμα πατρίδος, Helen* 206).
[423] Meltzer (2006, 199) argues that Helen's wish provides another significant feature of her Homeric portrayal as a woman who sees herself as an object of artistic representation.
[424] Hall (2010, 281) mentions the issues of the 'metatheatricality' in these lines.

of the divine rivalry between Hera and Aphrodite, the Greek women of the chorus mention that Menelaus, in his wanderings after the battle of Troy, 'carries off a prize that was no prize, but strife' (*γέρας, οὐ γέρας ἀλλ' ἔριν, Helen* 1134).

After the last adventure in Egypt, the real Helen, now on board his ship, becomes the reward of Menelaus' wanderings. Described as a 'purified' statue, she recalls the *xoanon* of Artemis accompanied by Orestes, Iphigenia and Pylades during its ceremonial return across the sea. The concept of Helen as a reward brings together the symbolism of the statue of the goddess Artemis and the virtuous Iphigenia in Euripides' *Iphigenia in Tauris*. Helen is both the mortal woman and the 'statue' image beside the sacred tomb of Proteus. Her journey is illustrated as a form of purification of her once bad reputation.

The return voyage is described twice into the play: first in the chorus's desire for Helen's safe return journey (Helen, 1451-64), finally when the Dioscuri order her to sail with her husband, a journey which they will accompany (*Helen* 1662-5).[425]

The song of the Greek women invokes Nereus as the 'dance leader of the beautiful dancing dolphins' (*εἰρεσίας φίλα/ χοραγὲ τῶν καλλιχόρων/ δελφίνων, Helen* 1453-5). Swimming around the ship, the dolphins replace the encircling Nereids, the fifty daughters of Nereus who are often his 'dance-partners', and accompany the ship over the sea. The idyllic journey is assisted by Galaneia, the personified goddess of calm seas. Galaneia invites the sailors to take up their pinewood oars and to bring Helen to the fine harbours of Perseus' land. The chorus desires to join the migrating cranes in their flight in order to be the messengers of Menelaus' imminent arrival in Sparta. The second antistrophe of the song is devoted to the Dioscuri, invoked as Helen's saviours

[425] Burian (2007, 279) suggest that the ode is in the form of a *propemptikon*, a poetic wish for a secure voyage.

(*σωτῆρες τᾶς Ἑλένας, Helen* 1500), foreshadowing their final appearance as *dei ex machina*. The chorus invites them to travel from the heavens to the 'grey-green salt swell and the dark-hued, white-crested surges of the sea, bringing to sailors fresh-blowing breezes from Zeus' (*γλαυκὸν ἔπιτ' οἶδμα κυανόχροά τε κυμάτων/ ῥόθια πολιὰ θαλάσσας/ ναύταις εὐαεῖς ἀνέμων/ πέμποντες Διόθεν πνοάς, Helen* 1501-1505). The prayer of the chorus is satisfied and the Dioscuri promise Helen and Menelaus that they will have favourable winds during their homeward journey. The Dioscuri will oversee their sister's return, as 'saviour brothers' and 'fellow travellers', 'riding on horseback alongside them over the sea' (*πόντον παριππεύοντε πέμψομεν πάτραν, Helen* 1665).

This imaginary company of immortal divinities might suggest the portrayal of another kind of invisible dramatic chorus. Gods, like the dolphins, surround the ship like a dancing chorus, escorting Menelaus and Helen's journey of escape to Greece. The divine ability to fly like birds among the clouds, or over the moving waves of the sea, their poetic transformations to stars and flying creatures, their expression of their desires through favourable winds or angry waves, and their frequent correlations with musical sounds, justify their 'choral' character, and their function as sacred escorts, as appropriate company for Helen and Menelaus' victorious journey to either heroism or immortality.

3.4.1.5 Sea Rituals in Barbaric Lands - Euripides' *Helen* and *Iphigenia in Tauris*

The homeland, for Iphigenia and Helen, before their divine abductions by Artemis and Hermes, respectively, is a space of danger, betrayal, and moral ambiguity. Forced to obey the rules and the decisions of their own community, or trapped by difficult conditions caused by divine quarrels, the two heroines experience emotions of exile in their own country. Their transportation to remote lands secures their survival. Invisible to the Greeks, like ghosts, Iphigenia and Helen, are only names whose memory haunts the moral values of their compatriots. The vast sea, borders their existence, in the outer limits of the world, and becomes the appropriate way for their return. The audience follows the adventures of the heroines to exotic and remote regions becoming, through the plot of the plays, part of an alien space. In the political, cultural, and social centre of the *polis*, Euripides transforms the 'here'; the theatrical stage, in order to decorate the 'elsewhere'; an 'unexplored' barbaric land.[426]

These images of 'elsewhere' illustrate a geographically remote world where the heroines are trapped, living a life of longing and sorrow. It is rightly observed that the escape tragedies, like Euripides' *Helen* and *Iphigenia in Tauris*, reflect the desire for Greeks to escape from their reality, as a result of catastrophes, defeats, and turmoil, which had happened to the military and political background of their lives, the years when the plays were performed.[427] However, in both tragedies, the 'exiled' heroines, although they are transported to far-flung lands by divine powers, return back to Greece, saved by their beloved ones and under god's supervision, company, and support, are rewarded with a better future. The sailing from northeast or southeast to Greece,

[426] Padel (1974, 241) observes that 'the 'here' is the fabric of the decorative 'elsewhere''.
[427] Wright (2005, 47), Hartigan (1981, 26).

following the route of the sun, symbolically implies their strength to pursue a better life and justifies their desire to continue their lives under the radiant sky.

In order to achieve their goals, the Greek protagonists of the two plays organize escape plans via the sea. Helen and Iphigenia's goals are achieved by persuading the barbaric, though gullible, tyrants who are vulnerable to woman's intelligence and deceit. The setting, in both plays, is not accidentally placed near the seashore, where the main and the most crucial part of the rescue plan will be performed. The liminal space of the shore expresses in the most illustrative way, the ambiguity that occurs in the middle stage of the rites of passage, when the participants, standing in front of a spatiotemporal threshold, undergo a metaphorical death, as a necessary step towards their rebirth. Additionally, the shore acquires multiple dramatic functions. It is the land of unexpected arrivals and departures; an imaginary locus of rocky cliffs and caves, which function as ideal spaces for hiding and protection; a marginal zone for sacred rituals, which are closely associated with the dynamic power of the sea, as a realm of purification and loss.

The rituals either 'along the sea's damp shore' (*πόντου νοτερὸν εἶπας ἔκβολον, I.T.* 1042), or on a vessel sailing 'so far that the foam of its oars can hardly be seen from the Egyptian land' (*ὥστ' ἐξορᾶσθαι ῥόθια χερσόθεν μόλις, Helen* 1269) provide, initially, a religious and harmless ceremony, which very soon transmutes to a bloody massacre for many local sailors and servants, who struggle to prevent the flight of the Greek escapees. The trapped victims of the 'wild' barbarians become the most cruel and merciless 'hunters' whose desire for escape leads them to atrocious crimes.[428]

[428] The animal motifs are prevalent in the play with numerous references to the scenes of abduction, subjugation, and rape.

In Euripides' *Iphigenia in Tauris*, the sacrificial and purification rituals play a prominent role, justifying and determining the evolution the plot. At Aulis the goddess Artemis deceives the Greek king Agamemnon and steals the mortal Iphigenia. At Tauris the mortal Iphigenia deceives the barbarous king Thoas and steals the statue of the goddess Artemis. Between the supposed sacrifice of Iphigenia at Aulis and the threat of the impending sacrifice of Orestes and Pylades at Tauris, there is a spatiotemporal distance, which the reunion and salvation of the two victims finally closes. The dramatic spaces of these rituals are in close proximity to the sea. The burnt offerings (*I.T.* 16) of the Greek army in Aulis does not satisfy the divine will of Artemis, who, according to Calchas' announcement, desires the blood of the maiden princess Iphigenia, instead of an animal sacrifice. The Greeks, in the famous inlets of Aulis (*I.T.* 7-8), offer to the 'light-bearing goddess' (*φωσφόρῳ θεᾷ*, *I.T.* 21), 'the fairest product the year should bear' (*τὸ καλλιστεῖον εἰς ἔμ' ἀναφέρων*, *I.T.* 20-21).[429] Agamemnon deceives his daughter into believing that she is going to married the son of Thetis, Achilles, but when Iphigenia arrives at Aulis as a bride, her hymeneal songs are transformed into woes of sorrow. Iphigenia, narrating her own experience, informs the audience about Artemis' intervention and her transformation to the Taurian land. Following her salvation, Iphigenia ignores the circumstances surrounding her compatriots and the Greeks ignore her existence.

In front of the temple of Artemis, close walking distance from the sea, Iphigenia, as a priestess, is in charge of the sacrifices of all the Greeks who arrive on the barbaric Taurian land. Particularly, her role is to perform consecration, 'sprinkling holy water

[429] Kyriakou (2006, 57) suggests that Calchas' identification of Artemis as a 'flame bearing' goddess foreshadows the destructive power of fire and the outcome of the battle. Bearing this in mind, it is tempting to suggest the contradiction between the image of the goddess surrounded by flames as a power of disaster and the image of the statue of Artemis on board during its return journey to Greece, surrounded by the waters of the sea which indicate Artemis' purification and transformation into a benign and 'calm' deity.

around the heads' (*χαίτην ἀμφὶ σὴν χερνίψομαι*, *I.T.* 622) of the imminent sacrificial victims in order to purify them. When the play starts, an analogous ritual of purification haunts her dreams. Iphigenia, in her sleep, dreams that she was removed to Argos and 'sprinkles with water' a pillar with a human voice as 'one about to die' (*ὑδραίνειν αὐτὸν ὡς θανούμενον, I.T.* 54). Interpreting that the pillar symbolizes her brother Orestes, Iphigenia is convinced that the dream is a sign of Orestes' death. Her absence from Argos enforces her to offer libations in the foreign land of Tauris, so as to honour her 'lost' brother. The natural purity and perfection of the libation substances, which is accompanied by Iphigenia's lamenting tears, are the appropriate honours for her dearest brother. The power of the water, as part of the ritual procedure, is mentioned once again, when Orestes, during the recognition scene, refers to the lustral waters and the bride's prenuptial bath before the supposed wedding at Aulis. We could suggest that both Iphigenia's lustration, and Orestes' mock purification in Tauris, are part of a 'sacrificial' ritual, and despite their impending death, the holy water, finally, protects and saves them.[430]

The rituals near the sea, as part of a thoroughly organized plan, offers a clever solution, which is effective for the rescuers. Iphigenia and Helen misguide and persuade the foreign kings to leave the authority of the rituals to them. The Greek princesses, beautiful and deceptive, taking advantage of the king's trustfulness, are determined to escape from their unbearable conditions at any cost whether their efforts lead to salvation, or to death.[431]

[430] For the fresh and shalt water as power of purification in multiple aspects of ancient Greek everyday life and the discrimination between them, see Beaulieu (2008, 22-23).

[431] The deceptiveness of Helen and Iphigenia could correspond to Simonides' portrayal of the type of woman whose mysterious ambiguity is compared with the sea. In Simonides' *Satire on Women*, 'the sea is like a woman with a twofold mind…Just as the sea often stands without a ripple, harmless, a great joy to sailors, in the season of summer, but offer rages, tossed about by the loud-crashing waves, such a

Iphigenia seeks an adequate excuse in order to be 'on board on the stout sterned ship with the statue of the goddess' (*I.T.*, 1000-1). Nevertheless, she expresses her eagerness to help Orestes, even if her plan will not turn out well and she has to die. Iphigenia again accepts her role as a saviour, whose sacrifice assists her home and brother's salvation (*I.T.,* 1002-6). The mutual oaths, for death or salvation, are also given by the fatal spouses of the Trojan War, in Euripides' *Helen*. Menelaus promises: 'On top of the tomb I'll kill you, then kill myself. But first I will fight a great battle to save your marriage' (Euripides' *Helen* 842-4).

Helen and Iphigenia reject the naïve and frivolous suggestions, which are expressed by Menelaus (*Helen*, 1044) and Orestes (*I.T.*, 1020), respectively, to kill the barbarian ruler. Both women use their female cunning and cleverness to organize an escape plan, which is based upon the present conditions of their male rescuers in order to profit from them.

Iphigenia making use of Orestes' 'torments as clever devices' (*I.T.*, 1031), declares to Thoas that 'he had killed his mother in Argos' (*I.T.*, 1033). As it is forbidden for him to be sacrificed to the goddess as impure, he should be purified with seawater (*I.T.*, 1039). Iphigenia also claims that she has to wash the statue of Artemis because Orestes has touched it. The danger of *miasma* (pollution) ensures that nobody from the local community will accompany the purification participants to the shore. The well-hidden Greek fine-oared ship will support their departure. In both tragedies, there is an episode which is the initial part of the ritual procession. The kings express some final queries as a result of their suspicion about some unclear aspects of the ritual, but,

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woman seems very much like this in temperament. The sea has a variable nature' (fr.7, 27-42 in Gerber, D. E. *Greek iambic poetry* (1999, 307).

finally, allow the Greeks to depart. The purification party, which is accompanied by the barbarian servants, leaves the stage, following the path to the seashore.

In Euripides' *Helen*, although the shipwreck of Menelaus and the destruction of his ship provides a significant obstacle, as they do not have a mean of escape, Helen's deception, which is dependent on Menelaus' pretence to act as a messenger of his own death, persuades Theoclymenus to allow them to perform a funeral rite at sea, supporting them with a swift Phoenician vessel (*Helen*, 1272).[432]

The empty winding-robes and the empty bed; a bed 'strewn with covers but without a body' (*Helen* 1261), could be regarded as portraying, ironically, the ancient Greek's identification of the sea as a space of no return. The funeral ceremony at sea functions as a 'ritual of memory', which honours the name of the dead, indicating a symbolic partial 'epiphany' of his body, in order to accept the gifts (*γέρας*) of the livings.[433] As part of the escape plan, the dead Menelaus represents a fictitious invisible *eidolon.* Menalaus' dead name will save his living body. The drowned hero becomes the crucial point of Helen's strategy for escape. When the ship sails far enough from the shore, the image of Menelaus on the prow, holding his sword, illustrates a striking image of a real 'epiphany'. Menelaus reveals his true identity. He is neither another phantom in the evolution of the plot, nor a shadow who returns from the bleak and dark realm of Hades, but a shipwrecked sailor that the sea washed up on the shores of Egypt, and is now ready to fight once again for his life. Menelaus' 'phantom' in a cenotaph in

[432] In both tragedies the barbarian kings ignore and do not have the desire to extend their knowledge regarding the Greeks and their religious customs. It is plausible to conjecture that this 'arrogance' contributes to the evolution of the plot. Furthermore, it could be regarded as another indirect implication of Euripides' doubts about divine power and intentions, even though he finally introduces them, *ex machina*, as glorious saviours.

[433] Pearce's article (1983, 110-5) offers an extended analysis of the tomb by the sea as a motif in ancient Greek literature.

the sea, as well as, escape of Helen's replica into illusionary realms, allows the real Helen and Menelaus to continue their journey into the real world.

The battle between the Greeks and the Egyptians, on the Sidonian ship near the shores of Egypt, could mirror, from one point of view, the rivalry between Greeks and Trojans. The Greeks arrive with their ships in a remote barbaric land in order to achieve for one more time the initial purpose of their expedition, to retrieve Helen and transport her back to Greece. This time Menelaus does not drag violently on board an ethereal apparition. Instead, he helps his genuine and loyal wife to escape with him, and to sail together back to Sparta. Menelaus offers a quick battle, in which he, easily, wins, causing the loss of a few Egyptians.[434]

The unarmed Egyptians face an unexpected ferocious attack. The servants of the king Theoclymenus, unable to defend themselves, use the only available weapons they had. The wooden oars, the most appropriate implements for water-borne propulsion, become their swords, but this transformation proves futile. The broken oars, as combat weapons, does not help the Egyptians to beat the Greek sailors. Instead the Egyptians dived off the ship and died. The sea preserves the image of a grave, which engulfs in its deep waters, not a lost Greek sailor but the real corpses of Theoclymenus' sailors. The servant, as the only survivor, transports to Theoclymenus the message of Helen's escape and salvation. The image, ironically, reflects the role that Iphigenia confides to Pylades, as a surviving sailor and the messenger who will report her salvation to anyone who loved her, in *Iphigenia in Tauris*.

The opposed images of purity and impurity, truth and deceit, death and salvation, reflect the multiple and different aspects of human nature and mirror the

[434] Hartigan (1981, 27) identifies Menelaus' violence as a 'brutal slaughter on board ship'.

dynamic and ever-changing nature of life. For the tragic heroes, rebirth requires death, restoration presupposes destruction, and freedom follows a long period of real or symbolic captivity. In the moments of deepest desperation, the sea rituals provide Helen and Iphigenia with the chance of a thrilling escape, which leads them to salvation. In fact, in neither of the two plays does the sea ritual as a purification ceremony take place. What does take place is the symbolic and consoling purification for its protagonists who are released from their misfortunes escaping from their 'barbaric' isolation.

Chapter 4

Sophocles' *Philoctetes* – The 'island tragedy'

4.1 The theatrical scene as an island in the centre of Athenian *polis*

During the spring of 409 BC, the Athenian imperial hegemony experienced one of its most critical historical periods. Athens was haunted by the effects of the calamitous Sicilian expedition and the consequences of the protracted Peloponnesian War. The high spirits of expectation for the naval campaign in Sicily were followed by feelings of frustration and humiliation among the citizens after the total destruction of the Athenian armada.[435] Domestic upheavals and the internal polarization between the rival political factions triggered a series of events that would lead to the oligarchic revolution of 411. The democratic Athenian navy, which established a new government, seceded and threatened to sail against the oligarchic Athens. Nevertheless, after a few months the metropolis regained control, and the democratic institutions of Athens were restored, offering a hope of victory and peace.

In Sophocles' *Philoctetes* the brutality of the battlefield is transformed to an *agon* of persuasion in a piece of land surrounded by the sea. The male characters of the play, who are soldiers dressed for battle, 'fight' to resolve the moral conflict between them, but the resolution is not achieved without the divine intervention at the end of the play. After a long-lasting civic war between the Greek states, Sophocles' 'island tragedy' offers some essential insight into the relationship among the Greeks and through the play's action proves the necessity of compromise in the contemporary historic background. This chapter explores the dramatic functions and the symbolic

[435] Thucydides (6.30-32, 7.75-87, 8.1-2).

interpretations of the island of Lemnos as a scenic place in Sophocles' *Philoctetes*. In this section I intend to show how the *skene* of the ancient theatre is transformed into an isolated island in the centre of the Athenian *polis*; a field of dialectic, persuasion, and negotiation. The second part of this chapter surveys a range of evidences through the text in order to establish the emblematic role of the cave near the sea as a primitive *oikos*. The third section is concerned with the nexus of sea journeys in the play while the last section deals with the distinct correlation between isolated heroes, fire, and salvation.

War is a game of sovereignty; a dangerous play between enemies, and, in some cases, among allies. People fight to conquer unknown lands, and gain money, honour, glory, and immortality. Man's ambitions to subjugate the 'other' is an adventure of self-identification, which in many cases leads to a destiny of suffering or death. Sophocles' *Philoctetes* is a tragedy of civil conflict, in which the need to bring about victory on the fields of the war, prophesied by the Trojan seer Helenus, leads to a significant negotiation between allies on the island of Lemnos. Their ultimate cooperation will be based, though, on external divine assistance when the *agon* of persuasion, threats and deceit among the Greek interlocutors - the mortal characters of the play - fails to reach a satisfactory conclusion. The backdrop to this quarrel is an uninhabited island, far away from women, family rivals, human sacrifices, or bloody murders. It is important to emphasize that there is no blood relationship between any of the men. The Greek interlocutors have to invent society 'from the bottom up'. Sophocles' political experience may justify the public-minded spirit that is accentuated throughout his tragedies. In his *Philoctetes* the desired victory against the Trojans will be achieved only when the physical and emotional pain of the exiled individual is healed by his re-integration into his former civilized community.

In Sophocles' *Philoctetes*, the crucial and determining combat takes place without weapons and corpses. Its arena shifts from the Trojan land to Lemnos: an island 'uninhabited and untrodden by the foot of mortal man' (*βροτοῖς ἄστιπτος οὐδ' οἰκουμένη, Philoctetes* 2).[436] This 'friendless, isolated, and stateless' (*ἄφιλον ἔρημον ἄπολιν, Philoctetes*, 1018) region is transformed into a space of exile for Philoctetes.[437] His Greek compatriots abandoned him there on the way to Troy, after he was bitten by a serpent (*ἐχίδνης, Philoctetes* 267) on nearby Chryse, where the Greek army had anchored in order to offer sacrifices at the shrine of the island's homonymous goddess (*Philoctetes,* 266-70).[438] His pained cries and the unbearable odour of Philoctetes' wound forced the Greek generals to leave him, isolated and helpless, in no-man's land, adrift between his beloved homeland and the battlefields of Troy (*Philoctetes,* 6-10).

During the tenth year of the war, the prophecy given by Helenus is reported on stage by the ambivalent narration of a disguised sailor who appears on stage as a merchant. His presence as a messenger is part of Odysseus' deceitful plan. The False Merchant informs Philoctetes, and hence the audience, that the Trojan seer prophesied that the Greeks 'would never sack Troy's towers without fetching this man, by means of persuasive words, from this island on which Philoctetes is now living' (*καὶ τἀπὶ Τροίᾳ*

[436] The island of Lemnos was sacred to Hephaestus, the god of metallurgy. In Homer's *Iliad* (1.590ff) Hephaestus narrates the story of his fall on Lemnos when he was expelled from Olympus by the godfather Zeus because he defied him. The fallen god was cared for by the Sintians (Homer's *Iliad* 1.594, 18.394), the first inhabitants of the island of Lemnos who are said to have been a Thracian tribe well known for their wild speech (Homer's *Odyssey* 8.294). Bearing this in mind, it is tempting to suggest that the incomprehensible speech of these first Lemnian inhabitants which was not understood by the 'civilized' societies, may reflect Philoctetes' not 'understandable' behaviour by his Greek visitors.

[437] In the earlier version of the myth by Aeschylus and also by Euripides, the chorus of the tragedy consists of inhabitants of Lemnos. As Rehm (2002, 138-9) observes the various myths surrounding Lemnos' early history 'eventually link its population to Athens'. For the innovation of Sophocles to present the island of Lemnos as an unpopulated island see Rehm (2002, 138-155).

[438] Sophocles uses the Greek word *ἐχίδνης* as a name for the snake that bit Philoctetes. Echidna was a monstrous chthonic figure, half-woman/nymph and half-snake, who lived in a cave under a hollow, far from mortals and immortals (Hesiod, *Theogony* 297-304). Philoctetes' isolation far from the world of humans, abandoned without any sign of divine assistance, may, indirectly, imply a symbolic connection between them. Echidna's cave, as a space to which she can carry off passers-by, and her death, while she slept (Apollodorus, *Library* 2.1.2), reflect the liminality of Philoctetes' rocky prison, and his imminent deceit commited against him by Neoptolemus while he was asleep.

πέργαμ' ὡς οὐ μή ποτε/ πέρσοιεν, εἰ μὴ τόνδε πείσαντες λόγῳ/ ἄγοιντο νήσου τῆσδ' ἐφ' ἧς ναίει τανῦν, Philoctetes 611-13). Only then, as Heracles states in his divine speech (*Philoctetes*, 1409-44), and only with the aid of Neoptolemus, as Odysseus confides to the son of Achilles (*Philoctetes,* 115), could the Hellenes be rewarded with a glorious victory against the Trojans.

The victory of the war is founded upon, and indeed relies upon, the participation and devotion of each individual man to collective actions and decisions. The different and multiple experiences of each soldier enhance the efficacy of the collective strategic plans and contribute to achieving the desired effect. Landing on island of Lemnos, which is unpopulated in this dramatic fiction as it never was in reality, Neoptolemus and Odysseus transform the primitive landscape into a political stage, which reflects, through the theatrical space, the antagonistic affairs and the sociopolitical structure of the 'democratic' institutions of the Athenian hegemony. Beyond the variety of ideologies, the military strategies, and the personal ambitions, the democratic function of the civilized *polis* presupposes and demands of every citizen his participation in his civic and public duties.

The Theatre of Dionysus in Athens portrays another public space where individuals from a variety of backgrounds become part of a community's festival, participating either as performers or as spectators. The theatrical stage creates not only a cultural environment, but also provides a prominent instructive role as a 'paideutic arena'.[439] In the sociopolitical and religious frameworks of the Athenian *polis*, the interpretation and visualization of the mythical world, as part of the theatrical experience, mirrored and underlined the anxieties and concerns of Athenian society.[440]

[439] Rehm (2002, 141).
[440] Hall (2010, 21).

Hence the stage of the ancient theatre illustrated - literally or symbolically - a field of *agon*, negotiation, and self-identification through the combination of truthfulness and desired deception in theatrical activity.

In Sophocles' *Philoctetes*, the scene, 'bare' of any sign of civilization, implies a 'neutral' space. It functions as the most appropriate way to create a symbolic intermediate zone between two different worlds: the realms of the *polis* and of war.[441] Although the theatrical personas of the play could be characterized as soldiers on their military expeditions out of the civilized *polis*, they simultaneously maintain many aspects of their political nature. Nevertheless, Philoctetes' redundancy from war activities, and his abandonment to an isolated island, condemn him to live in a 'scale above humanity'.[442] As neither a soldier nor a citizen Philoctetes struggles to survive as a human while undergoing a long period of natural and psychological suffering. When the ships of Odysseus and Neoptolemus arrive from Troy, Lemnos is transformed into a 'land of dilemma', where games of persuasion and power are played not only between individuals, but also play out as an inner struggle in each character's thought as struggles between duty and desire, loyalty and betrayal, selfishness and forgiveness.

The actual theatrical tableau in *Philoctetes* is an 'eremitic space' surrounded by the sea.[443] Although no ancient Greek tragedy depicts a setting of a ship sailing the sea, it is important to note how emphatically the image of the island could provide, metaphorically, the impression of a vessel surrounded by waves, creating a 'land-

[441] Greengard (1987, 106).
[442] In the *Politics* (Book1, 1253a) Aristotle insists that the man is 'by nature a political animal, and a man that is by nature and not merely by fortune without a state is either low in the scale of humanity or above it'. Despite its primitiveness, Philoctetes' presence in Lemnos determines the ambivalent nature of the island as a liminal border area with both civilized and natural characteristics. Philoctetes is torn and wavers between his desire for *nostos* and his stubbornness. Initially his enforced exile not only failed to corrupt his civilized origins, but also created a new 'heroic' behaviour capable of redefining the moral codes of the civilized world. Philoctetes' desire for his own rehabilitation presupposes the restoration of civilized society, which itself is wounded by arrogant politicians, and betrayals among friends and allies.
[443] Rehm (2002, 141). The word 'eremitic', could also be applied to the martyr and ascetic isolation as a part of a sacred life which may lead to a kind of a holy communication between mortals and divinities.

illusion' in the middle of the enormity of the seascape.[444] As a result, through the theatrical symbiosis of performers and spectators, the latter could be allowed to project themselves into the fictional world of the former, especially as any scenery was made with wood by carpenters. Also, the spectators could think of themselves not only as gods in the machine, who observe the evolution of the plot, but also as a chorus of adventurous sailors whose theatrical journey would function as an escape from their everyday life. Simultaneously this would be a kind of initiation-adventure into the mysteries, the cults, and the customs of a world unknown to them.[445]

Despite the thematic importance of sea journeys in the ancient Greek drama, the recurrent dramatic seascape, and the prevalent aquatic imagery, it is important to mention that in the extant corpus of ancient Greek tragedy, it is only Sophocles' *Philoctetes* where the imaginary ships of the play are anchored to 'the shores of the land surrounded by sea' (*ἀκτὴ μὲν ἥδε τῆς περιρρύτου χθονὸς, Philoctetes* 1), transforming the theatrical stage into an island.[446]

The tragedian as a skillful mariner leads the imaginary ship of the theatre along his preferred geographical, ideological, and political routes. He provides his crew, the spectators of his performance, with a journey to illusion: an alternative image of their own reality. More fundamental than this particular dynamic of the theatre as a means of exploration, is its ability to reflect matters such as political antinomies, social uncertainties and moral declines, which refer to audience's real lives and society.

[444] However, Attic comedy presents an image of a boat crossing a lake. In Aristophanes' *Frogs* Charon, the ferryman of the river Styx, appears in his boat taking Dionysus across the lake to Hades.
[445] Hall (2010, 8) correlates audiences' elevated level of viewing with the god's appearance in the machine. Furthermore Hall (2014, 94) rightly observes that 'the ancient Greek metaphor of the symposium as a voyage in a seagoing ship was produced by the cultural connection between the symposium and colonization'.
[446] Euripides' *Cyclops* is the only complete extant satyr play in which the *skene* represents the great cave of the Cyclops at the foot of Mount Etna, a volcano on the island of Sicily. Furthermore, other satyr plays like Aeschylus' *Diktyoulkoi* also had island settings. I follow the view supported by Jebb (1898), Kamerbeek (1980) and Ussher (1990), that Odysseus and Neoptolemus arrived on Lemnos on two ships, each commanding his own vessel.

Theatre bridges worlds distanced by space and time, making them familiar to the audience, through their staged visualization at the centre of Athenian city-state.

In Sophocles' *Philoctetes*, the door visible on stage, the mouth of the cave, leads inside not to an obscure hollow, but to a second entrance or exit. The setting, alongside the power of imagination and the poetry of language, transports the audience to a far away island, and more specifically to the place in front of Philoctetes' natural dwelling where the main action of the play takes place. The audience's imaginary journey from Athens to Lemnos is the first and the most important stage of the theatrical procedure, which transforms spectators into travellers, and transports them into the world of the myth. Like the cave of Philoctetes, theatre offers the audience a 'double sitting place', as a mediate zone between the time before, and the time after the performance, similar to the threshold between the dramatic fictional world and their real lives.

Outside of the *polis*, the natural environment is a paradigm of a dynamic balance capable of urging and influencing humans to discover wisdom and intelligence through their coexistence with nature. Furthermore, a man exposed to the elemental forces of his environment, and facing his most wild and primitive instincts, redefines his relationship with the civilized world, even though he is divorced from it. Although remote and barbaric lands are described in many ancient Greek tragedies as inhuman and inhospitable spaces, they can also provide a milieu where roles and ideas can be explored, fit settings for characters' journeys to self-awareness.

On the island of Lemnos, Philoctetes does not meet any barbarian king nor any hostile inhabitant. He struggles with his own demons, and fights against his compatriots whose desires are for him to accompany them to Troy in order to satisfy their military ambitions. For him the crude barbarians are his former 'friends' who abandoned him

'with no one to help, and no one to share in the struggle with (his) sickness' (*οὐχ ὅστις ἀρκέσειεν οὐδ' ὅστις νόσου/ κάμνοντι συλλάβοιτο, Philoctetes* 281-2).

Philoctetes, addressing the elements of the Lemnian landscape, as his only companions in his lonely exile, puts himself in the centre of island's natural environment as its only inhabitant.[447] When Philoctetes, as a supplicant, begs and implores the young Neoptolemus not to leave him, Neoptolemus 'no longer speaks' to him, but 'as one whose intention is never to release it, he turns his face away' (*ἀλλ' οὐδὲ προσφωνεῖ μ' ἔτι/ ἀλλ' ὡς μεθήσων μήποθ', ὧδ' ὁρᾷ πάλιν, Philoctetes* 934-5). In his utmost despair Philoctetes appeals to the surrounding landscape, crying:

> *ὦ λιμένες, ὦ προβλῆτες, ὦ ξυνουσίαι*
>
> *θηρῶν ὀρείων, ὦ καταρρῶγες πέτραι,*
>
> *ὑμῖν τάδ', οὐ γὰρ ἄλλον οἶδ' ὅτῳ λέγω,*
>
> *ἀνακλαίομαι παροῦσι τοῖς εἰωθόσιν.*
>
> You bays, you headlands, you mountain beasts that live with me,
>
> you jagged rocks, to you I raise this cry, for you are my habitual companions, and I know no other to whom I can speak.
>
> (*Philoctetes*, 936-939)

One of the most important ethical values among humans in ancient Greek society was the reciprocal relation of *philia* (friendship). Betrayed by his compatriots, Philoctetes remains a 'man in misery, alone, deserted and friendless in his suffering' (*ἄνδρα δύστηνον, μόνον/ ἔρημον ὧδε κἄφιλον κακούμενον, Philoctetes* 227-8).

[447] Schein (2003, 111) characterizes Philoctetes as 'both sub-human and superhuman' and notes that he sees himself as part of the island's natural ecology.

Philoctetes' feelings of solidarity towards his fellow commanders were violated ten years earlier when they forcibly expelled him from their military adventures. When Neoptolemus takes the sacred bow from the crippled hero, Philoctetes laments in desperation and identifies himself as 'a corpse, a shadow of smoke, the merest ghost' (*ἐναίρων νεκρὸν ἢ καπνοῦ σκιάν/ εἴδωλον ἄλλως, Philoctetes* 946-7). The bow of Heracles is not only a means of Philoctetes' survival, but also a symbol of a sincere and loyal friendship. Neoptolemus' actions to take possession of the legendary bow of Heracles could be interpreted as another threat capable of violating the old and special friendship between Heracles and Philoctetes.

During his long isolation on Lemnos, the crippled hero fictitiously personified the natural features of the island, transforming the sounds of earth to voices, which offered a substitute for human companionship in its absence. Furthermore, the echoes of Philoctetes' painful cries were the only signs of response to his desire for a human voice of consolation (*Philoctetes*, 188-90, 693-4, 1458-60). When the Greek embassy arrives on Lemnos, Philoctetes expresses the wish to hear their human voices (*φωνῆς δ' ἀκοῦσαι βούλομαι, Philoctetes* 225). Nevertheless, until the divine intervention of Heracles Philoctetes remains symbolically deaf to the various attempts of the Greek envoys to persuade him to follow them to Troy.

As a paradigm of a mortal, who, after his heroic labours and the unjust suffering is elevated to the spheres of immortality, Heracles offers to Philoctetes visible evidence of the possibility of a consoling salvation. Heracles asks Philoctetes to listen to his divine voice, which ordains the sufferer as protégé, and convinces him to follow the Greeks to Troy. Philoctetes responds: 'You make your appearance after a long time and speak with a voice that I have longed for; and I shall not disregard your word' (*ὦ φθέγμα ποθεινὸν ἐμοὶ πέμψας/ χρόνιός τε φανείς/ οὐκ ἀπιθήσω τοῖς σοῖς μύθοις,*

Philoctetes 1445-7). In a world of betrayal, disappointment, and suspicion, the voice of Heracles is a token of a sincere friendship and the guarantor of the 'great Fate' (*μεγάλη Μοῖρα, Philoctetes* 1466) that awaits Philoctetes at Troy.

Philoctetes' journey to Troy transforms him from a desperate traveller (*δεινὸς ὁδίτης, Philoctetes* 147), seeking food and full of dread, into a hopeful voyager whose transportation will lead him to his destiny, and hence to war, and to a 'duly-ordained outcome' created by the 'all-subduing deity' (*χὠ πανδαμάτωρ/ δαίμων, ὃς ταῦτ' ἐπέκρανεν, Philoctetes* 1467-8). Philoctetes leaves behind him a life of an endless torture via the sea, the only means of escape from the land of oblivion. The waters of the sea will, metaphorically, purify and heal his excruciating wound.

Philoctetes' incorporation into the Greek army is a kind of return of a once exposed child. As Ussher observes, the Greek verb *ἐξέθηκ'* (*Philoctetes*, 5), which Odysseus uses early in the play to describe the act of Philoctetes' abandonment on Lemnos, also indicates that he is 'exposed like an unwanted child'.[448] Bearing this in mind, it is tempting to suggest that Lemnos could be imagined as a kind of Kaiadas. Philoctetes' exile to an isolated island, and his exposure to the most inhuman conditions, against which he struggles for survival, could be compared to an indirect death sentence. Sophocles probably mirrors the extreme and inhuman practices of the Spartans, which condemned not only the disabled, sick, or malformed children to the *apothetae* (deposits), but also abandoned criminals, traitors and war prisoners there.[449]

[448] Ussher (1990, 111).

[449] Plutarch in *Lycurgus* (16.1) says that if an infant was ill-born or deformed, the elders of the tribe who officially examined it then sent it to the so-called Apothetae, a chasm like place at the foot of the Mt Taygetos. The site is often associated with the chasm of *Kaiadas*, nine kilometres west of Sparta in the Trypi village. The act of exposition of a helpless human was synonymous with death and is associated with the tossing over a cliff which was common executional practice in ancient Greece. Specifically in Athens, the convict was pushed over a high cliff into a deep trench which was called *barathron* or *orygma*. In Homer's *Iliad* (18. 394-405) Hephaestus welcomes Thetis as his saviour saying that he was cast to Lemnos because his mother Hera was disgusted by his lameness.

Lemnos' rocky landscape could be portrayed as a metaphor for the chasm of Kaiadas for the wretched Greek hero Philoctetes. Sophocles' skepticism about the military strategies of the 'democratic' Athens highlights the threat of inhuman policies that would result from the political ambitions for leadership and arrogant imperialistic desires.

Philoctetes is not Greece's enemy. He follows willingly the Hellenic expedition to Troy with seven ships (*ἑκόντα πλεύσανθ' ἑπτὰ ναυσὶ ναυβάτην*, *Philoctetes* 1027). Nevertheless the fatal accident at Chryse compels his compatriots to display their most inhumane attitudes in leaving him as a weak child by the chasm of a cave on the island of Lemnos.

4.2 The Cave of Philoctetes as a primitive *oikos*. A passage from suffering to freedom

In the opening scene of Sophocles' *Philoctetes*, the spectators are informed that Lemnos is an uninhabited island. But as the story unfolds, they see more than twenty people arguing about responsibilities, obligations, and moral decisions. Lemnos, despite its primitiveness, temporarily illustrates a space of conflict, where political, social, and military tactics should lead to a 'civilized' negotiation.

The island, even though unpopulated, and without any structure typical of a community, is inhabited by an exiled human who wanders alone as a ghost (*εἴδωλον*, *Philoctetes* 947) 'at a spot on the sea's edge' (*τόπον ἐσχατιαῖς, Philoctetes* 144). Philoctetes attempts to maintain his civilized status against his painful suffering and the harsh conditions of the foreign land of Lemnos by organizing his surroundings as an imagined society. The wild environment is transformed into a primitive kind of society

in which the natural features are replaced by basic elements of a civilized community. Philoctetes' struggle for salvation leads indirectly to the reconstruction of a more humane world.[450] His nostalgic emotions for an 'elsewhere', and, more specifically, for the return to his home (*oikos*), are fulfilled through his endeavour to transform the elements of the 'here'. The rocky cave of Philoctetes constitutes the focal point of his primitive existence: his own kind of *oikos* within the savage landscape of Lemnos.

The cave of Philoctetes is another paradigm, which justifies the identification of the caverns as symbols of ambiguity. Like the legendary cave of the Nymphs of Ithaca with its doubled entrance, one used by mortals and the other by immortals, Philoctetes' rock shelter has also two entrances offering another impressive example of the inextricable connection between the epic tradition and ancient Greek tragedy's versions of the myth.[451] The mouths of the caves, between the darkness of the hollow and the brightness of the sun, can be characterized as liminal spaces that separate the world of ignorance, mystery and primitiveness from the visible 'real' world. However, in *Philoctetes* this dichotomy is preserved only on a symbolic level. The two entrances create a tunnel-like shelter of the kind in which 'in winter one can sit twice in the sun while in summer a breeze inducing sleep blows through the shelter, pierced as it is at either end' (*ἵν' ἐν ψύχει μὲν ἡλίου διπλῆ/ πάρεστιν ἐνθάκησις, ἐν θέρει δ' ὕπνον/ δι' ἀμφιτρῆτος αὐλίου πέμπει πνοή, Philoctetes* 17-19). Philoctetes' dwelling-place with its two mouths, the front central door of the scene, which is visible to the audience, and one imagined rear door, which leads dramatically to the other side of the cliff, visually

[450] Paraphrasing, here a statement of the Greek philosopher Protagoras, Philoctetes is 'the measure of all things' in his lonely exile. Protagoras uses the word χρήματα (a thing that one needs or uses) instead of the general word ὄντα (entities) focusing on things that are used by or related to humans. For each individual there is no other truth than the one that springs from his sensations and impressions. For the correlation between Sophocles' *Philoctetes* and the teaching of the Sophists see Rose (1992, 266-330).
[451] For the caves of Ithaca see Homer's *Od*. 13.103-13, Porphyr. *De antro* 1-4 as cited in Ustinova (2009, 1).

represents his ambivalent nature, and the prevalent agony of a perpetually postponed escape.

As a space of protection the cave functions as a shelter providing for Philoctetes' rudimentary domestic needs.[452] When Odysseus asks Neoptolemus whether the cave has any domestic comforts which may suggest a human's habitation, Neoptolemus replies that there is 'a crude wooden drinking cup, the work of some poor craftsman and along with it some pieces of kindling' (*αὐτόξυλόν γ' ἔκπωμα, φλαυρουργοῦ τινος/ τεχνήματ' ἀνδρός, καὶ πυρεῖ' ὁμοῦ τάδε, Philoctetes* 35-36). The findings of their brief research testify to the 'primitive quality of Philoctetes' life'.[453] However, these natural materials, which are transformed into implements, are tokens of Philoctetes' attempts at domestication. Reversing Schein's observation that 'home (*oikos*) is a product of human culture', we could suggest that *oikos,* as the principal space where the family is constituted, and as a basic level of habitation, provides a dynamic role, whose evolution produces civilized forms of society.[454]

In Sophocles' *Philoctetes* trees are not portrayed as the woody plants used as the basic element for ship's construction. A ship can be used to conquer cities and to provide ways of escape. In contrast, the trees' leaves used as a mattress offer to Philoctetes a more comfortable place to sleep, and their trunks, transformed to a cup or pieces of kindling, provide him with a water-cup with which he can quench his thirst, and fire to warm his suffering body. In his desperate situation the wooden objects become synonym for treasure (*θησαύρισμα, Philoctetes* 37), as necessary household goods stored in his primitive shelter.

[452] Greengard (1987, 51).
[453] Schein (2013, 124).
[454] Schein (2013, 110).

The roofed dwelling, despite its rocky formation, implies a confined area, protected from bad weather conditions and animal attacks. The shelter had probably been formed by the erosive action of waves, or it could be shaped by an older volcanic eruption.[455] Either as a product of the erosive sea-water or as a formation of lava, the cave of Philoctetes is identified more times in the play as home (*οἶκον*, *δόμῳ*), roof (*στέγῃ*), or palace (*μέλαθρον*) than it is as cave (*ἄντρον*). Although the words refer to a primitive cave, which is visible to the audience, the recurrent allusions to the shelter as a product of construction offers a range of possible symbolic interpretations.

The cave becomes a substitute for Philoctetes' mainland Greek home in the region of Malis. Behind the imagined interior of the rocky hollow, is concealed a space that could offer a kind of consolation, able to mitigate the crippled hero's sufferings. Nevertheless, as Philoctetes mentions: 'the home under cover, with a fire, provides everything except freedom for me, freedom from my sickness' (*οἰκουμένη γὰρ οὖν στέγη πυρὸς μέτα/ πάντ' ἐκπορίζει πλὴν τὸ μὴ νοσεῖν ἐμέ, Philoctetes* 298-9). His desire for freedom presupposes the abandonment of the cave, and the arrival of a ship and sailors eager to transport him to his homeland. When Heracles persuades Philoctetes to follow the Greek army to Troy, in Philoctetes' farewell to the island of Lemnos, the cave is, emotionally, identified as a 'palace', which was shared to him 'in watching' (*ὦ μέλαθρον ξύμφρουρον, Philoctetes* 1453) as a protective friend.

The cave of Philoctetes leads him, symbolically, to follow a route to divine truth. Through an experience of suffering, Philoctetes' mind travels, crossing a threshold. His adventures in an unfamiliar world, through returning him to his primitive instincts and emotions, create a life-changing procedure capable of healing his traumas

[455] For the once active volcano Moschylos and the 'sacred' healing properties in its sulphorous volcanic soil see Austin (2011, 12-13).

and allowing his incorporation back into the civilized world. The cave symbolizes a descent (*katabasis*) to the netherworld, which involves a dynamic rebirth. Furthermore the metaphor of the cave as womb, and its close association with fertility, could create the allusion of Philoctetes' symbolic rebirth from the darkness of oblivion, pain and death to life.

Philoctetes on Lemnos is a 'corpse' (*νεκρὸν, Philoctetes* 946), a 'dead man among the living' (*ἐν ζῶσιν νεκρόν, Philoctetes* 1018), and a human who counts for 'nothing' (*οὐδέν εἰμι, Philoctetes* 1030). Although Philoctetes' obsessions adumbrate a fatal destiny, and an aura of death prevails in his miserable life, his loyalty to the words of his old friend Heracles offers him a final redemption. Considering the initiations into mystery religions as a kind of a voluntary death, and Plutarch who notes the resemblance of the Greek words 'to die' (*τελευτάω*) and 'to be initiated' (*τελέω*) saying that the moment of death, the soul suffers something similar to initiation,[456] we could suggest that Philoctetes' near-death experience is a long-lasting initiation. The double-mouthed cave, with its emblematic role as a space of the mystery cults in the ancient Greek world, provides the most appropriate scenery for the hero's passage through the symbolic darkness of the cave and death to the light of salvation and life.

Sophocles' Philoctetes is an isolated tragic mortal who dwells in an alien landscape near the sea waiting for a ship to arrive and to transport him to Greece. The sea is the only passage to his salvation but it also conceals within it the threat of an undesired voyage to the fields of the war. Lemnos is the centre of a net of trajectories, fictional or real, which determine the image of the sea as the prevalent dramatic landscape of the play.

[456] Plutarch's *De Anima 6*.

4.3 Sea journeys in Sophocles' *Philoctetes*

The plots of many ancient Greek tragedies are set in motion by a ship landing or being wrecked on the shore, near a civilized or barbaric community. This space of arrival, visible or invisible to the theatrical audience, is defined as a point of an imminent departure at the end of the play, whether it is compulsory or voluntary. The popularity of the sea-adventure stories in the various types of ancient Greek literature is derived from the extensive connection between the Greeks and the sea. In Sophocles' *Philoctetes*, the sea routes between Greece and Troy create not only a web of transportations, which assist in the dramatic construction of the play, but also they become the desired object of the Greek commanders, as the only way to bring the Trojan war to its end, and bring the tragedy to its final conclusion.

When the Greek navy anchored at the shores near Troy, the Greek commanders could not imagine that two men, who would be most indispensable for the Greek victory, were not with them. Neoptolemus, the son of Achilles, had been too young to follow his father to the fields of the war, remaining on the island of Skyros. Meanwhile, Philoctetes had been abandoned, wounded and helpless, on Lemnos after the episode on the nearby Chryse where the snake bit him, guarding her sacred precinct. When the prophecy of the seer Helenus clarifies that the Troy will not be captured unless the two men arrive on Trojan land, Greek envoys sail to the islands of Skyros and Lemnos in order to accompany Neoptolemus and Philoctetes to their camp near the banks of the river Scamander.

The two islands are geographically distant from the battlefield. Even though they provide a space of "protection" for Neoptolemus and Philoctetes, they do not offer to them the possibility of a glorious destiny. The two Greeks must embark on their

journeys, loyal in their duty as soldiers and to their mythical portrayal as heroes, in order to justify their 'tragic' status and to fulfil the divine will. The role of the islands, either as spaces of origin, or as landscapes of exile, attracts sustained attention, creating multiple, and, in the case of Lemnos, contradictory emotional effects, for the principal characters of the play.

In Sophocles' *Philoctetes* Lemnos, Scyros, and Ithaca, represent scenes of recruitment. Odysseus is trapped by Palamedes' trickery, when the prince of Euboea unmasks the feigned madness of the ingenious king. Odysseus tries to avoid his departure from Ithaca, against his oath to support Menelaus in case of someone abducting Helen (Euripides' *Iphigenia in Aulis,* 49-71). After the decision is made by the Greeks to travel to Troy, he knows that the journey will be a lengthy adventure away from his home.[457] Odysseus explains to Neoptolemus the reasons why it is credible and safe for the young islander to be the man who is going to deal with Philoctetes, and not himself. In his speech Odysseus, indirectly describes himself, saying to Neoptolemus:

σὺ μὲν πέπλευκας οὔτ' ἔνορκος οὐδενὶ

οὔτ' ἐξ ἀνάγκης οὔτε τοῦ πρώτου στόλου

You have not sailed under oath to anybody, or under duress

Nor as a member of the first expedition

(*Philoctetes* 72-73)

[457] Odysseus pretended to be mad by ploughing his fields with salt. Palamedes, placing the young son of Odysseus on front of his plough, reveals his ruse and forced him to join the Greek expedition. The story is known from the *Cypria* (West 2003, 70-71). Another version of the myth is also included in Apollodorus' *Epitome* E.3.7.

Odysseus, in contrast with Neoptolemus, was forced to obey the oath he had made, and sailed under duress as a member of the first expedition. As part of Odysseus' plan, Neoptolemus reveals to Philoctetes that Odysseus was a member of an embassy sent by Greeks to Scyros, after Achilles' death, 'in a ship with a gaily decorative prow' (*με νηὶ ποικιλοστόλῳ, Philoctetes* 343) in order to fetch him to fight for the Greek contingent. Neoptolemus claims that both Odysseus and Phoenix, the 'foster-father of his father' (*τροφεὺς τοὐμοῦ πατρός, Philoctetes* 344), convinced him with their persuasive words to take a swift decision. Under the compulsion of psychological anxiety and the desire to see the corpse of his beloved father for the last time, as well as the 'attractive promise' that according to Heaven's will, 'he is the one, and nobody else, who will take the city' (*τὰ πέργαμ' ἄλλον ἢ μ' ἑλεῖν, Philoctetes* 347) of Troy, the young Neoptolemus decides to set sail to Troy.

Odysseus departs from Troy for a second time as a member of a Greek embassy.[458] Following the sea route, he lands on the isolated island of Lemnos, this time accompanied by Neoptolemus. Their intention is to persuade Philoctetes to join the Greek army to fight against the Trojans, taking advantage of the irresistible weapons of Achilles that the crippled hero possesses. We could contend that the double presence of Odysseus in the Greek missions to Skyros and Lemnos presages the eventful years of his impending travails. Odysseus, as an emblematic wanderer hero, undertakes to organize the crucial mission, which will determine the outcome of the war against the Trojans. The ultimate goal of Odysseus' second arrival on the island of Lemnos is to redeem the act of Philoctetes' inhumane abandonment, which defined his first visit there. Nevertheless, Odysseus' motivations are not humanitarian but compelled by the yoke of necessity. This redemption would involve Philoctetes' transportation to the land

[458] In Homer's *Iliad* (Book 9) Odysseus along with Phoenix and Ajax, go to Achilles and attempt to convince him to return to the battlefield.

of Troy, a departure that will leave the island of Lemnos totally uninhabited, and will ultimately determine the long awaited return of the Greeks to their homeland.

In order to be reintegrated into his homeland, Philoctetes' suppurating wound needs to be 'purified' and his wilderness needs to be 'tamed'.[459] The journey to Troy provides Philoctetes with an image of the only passage that leads to a destiny in which he is released from his pains, which are caused either by divine punishment or by the inhuman unconcern of his comrades. Philoctetes' sailing to Troy is a necessary procedure before his final incorporation to a more civilized world. Between the primitiveness of his wild exile and the civilized Greek world, the fields of the war function as an intermediate state: a space where instinctive freedom contrasts with the social restraints and moral demands of civilization. After a long period of exile, Philoctetes desires an escape to somewhere far away from his misfortunes. Awaiting a Greek vessel to arrive, Philoctetes hopes that somebody will offer to him the perspective of salvation, transporting him to his homeland.

Which world is Philoctetes finally incorporated into? He can only achieve his blessed return back to Malis if he agrees to a compulsory voyage first to Troy. The outcome of the Trojan War as a thematic backbone of the play reveals and reflects, via the episode on the island of Lemnos, a world of un-heroic leaders, selfish politicians and imperialistic ambitions. Transcending their limits, are mortals uncontrolled or liberated? Perhaps the answer lies in the preservation of memory as a mortals' ability to organize his future, avoiding the mistakes of the past. Hence, the healing of Philoctetes, and his final reintegration into civilization may reflect the desired 'cure' of the entire society as a result of compromise and mutual concession.

[459] Easterling (1978, 36) and Vidal-Naquet (1973, 161) interpret Philoctetes' journey to Troy as a re-integration of a wild man into the city.

Philoctetes does not refuse to participate in the Trojan expedition as part of a Panhellenic alliance held together by a democratic spirit and solidarity between its members. But he does reject his mocking and deprecation by ambitious generals, military intrigues and arrogant 'friends'. His loneliness may be a mediated theatrical expression of the disappointment and despair evoked by the catastrophic aftermath of the protracted Peloponnesian war, and the nexus of the political demoralization in the last years of the fifth century. In this world there is no place for heroes: the era does not offer a setting for heroic labours and achievements. Philoctetes seeks only his release from his pains, literally and metaphorically.

In the theatre of Dionysus, among allies and friends, Philoctetes expresses his melancholic isolation in an anti-heroic world of violence, betrayal, and demoralization. In the final lines of the play, the sailors of the chorus 'pray to the sea nymphs to come and safeguard the journey back' (*νύμφαις ἁλίαισιν ἐπευξάμενοι/ νόστου σωτῆρας ἱκέσθαι, Philoctetes* 1470-1). The action of the play leads, in the end, to the beginning of another journey with an uncertain destination. Either to Troy, or to their homeland after the victorious passage from Ilium, the chorus' prayer ends with a desired arrival, which could symbolically reflect the return of the spectators to the world of reality.

4.4 Isolated heroes, Fire, and Salvation

On the isolated territory of Lemnos, Philoctetes, Neoptolemus, and Odysseus, participate in a conflict, which fails to reach a conclusion due to ineffective communication. The cooperation which Neoptolemus and Odysseus desire, which will lead to the sack of Troy, is achieved only after the divine intervention of Heracles at the end of the play. The divine force of the legendary hero is not based on his physical

power, but on his capacity to appeal to Philoctetes as an old friend whose intentions are honest and reliable. The relationship between Heracles and Philoctetes was built in a spirit of dedication and loyalty, years earlier, when Philoctetes lit the pyre that released Heracles from his painful torture. Heracles' arrival on Lemnos is an act of reciprocal favour (χάρις, *Philoctetes* 1413). As Schein mentions, this favour is offered in return for a favour received, which could be either Philoctetes' lighting of the funeral pyre or his status as receiver of Heracles' bow.[460] The ambiguity which surrounds the precise nature of the reciprocity between Heracles and Philoctetes provides another paradigm of divine inscrutability. Ostensibly, Heracles appears as a saviour who redeems a divine act of injustice. But the unmerited long-lasting suffering of Philoctetes, even though it is finally healed, is never explained. Neoptolemus, in trying to give a credible exegesis, says:

οὐδὲν τούτων θαυμαστὸν ἐμοί:

θεῖα γάρ, εἴπερ κἀγώ τι φρονῶ,

καὶ τὰ παθήματα κεῖνα πρὸς αὐτὸν

τῆς ὠμόφρονος Χρύσης ἐπέβη,

καὶ νῦν ἃ πονεῖ δίχα κηδεμόνων,

οὐκ ἔσθ' ὡς οὐ θεῶν του μελέτῃ

τοῦ μὴ πρότερον τόνδ' ἐπὶ Τροίᾳ

τεῖναι τὰ θεῶν ἀμάχητα βέλη,

πρὶν ὅδ' ἐξήκοι χρόνος, ᾧ λέγεται

[460] Schein (2013, 30).

200χρῆναί σφ' ὑπὸ τῶνδε δαμῆναι.

It was heaven's will, if I am any judge,

that those former sufferings

came upon him from ruthless Chryse.

And his hardships now, far from friends to care for him,

cannot be without the contrivance of some god,

so that he does not wield his irresistible

god-given weapon against Troy

before the time is fully come when, it is said,

she must succumb to it.

(*Philoctetes*, 191-200)

Gods offered him 'irresistible weapons', but this gift condemns him to a painful and desperate situation.[461] The invincible bow remains an un-heroic object far from the fields of the war: Philoctetes uses it not to threaten and kill enemies but to hunt birds (*θηροβολοῦντα πτηνοῖς, Philoctetes* 165-6) as a mean of his survival. Philoctetes' flying arrows, even though they are a gift capable of destroying Troy, lose their dynamic utility and serve as ordinary weapons, helping a primitive man to preserve his miserable life on an isolated island. Neoptolemus' accusation of the external forces, which act beyond mortal's control - such as necessity or gods - indirectly presupposes that mortals

[461]Tessitore (2003, 72) mentions that Philoctetes' bow connects him 'in an unambiguous and emblematic way with the realm of the gods'.

who arrive on the island will alone be unable to reaches their ultimate goal. The ultimate conclusion will be provided by a supernatural force, which leads the play to its end and the Greeks to the final victory.

Even though it seems that Heracles is the archetypal figure of the saviour in the play, and despite his final intervention as *deus ex machina*, it is interesting to notice the role of Philoctetes also as a visual symbol of salvation. Philoctetes became the saviour of Heracles. He endured the most wretched isolation in the worst health conditions, struggling against the natural forces and the wilderness of an unfriendly region. Finally, under the sway of Heracles' manipulative speech, Philoctetes is the one who takes the decision of his own salvation and, hence, offers the Greek army the victory against the Trojans, according to the divine will.

There is no doubt that many spectators would have made links in their own minds between Philoctetes and Prometheus.[462] As Greengard observes, both of them are 'angry, defiant, and consigned to an isolated wilderness imprisonment … and both figures are also linked with Heracles' and possess a divine instrument.[463] The powerful bow is used by Heracles to release Prometheus from his torture and Heracles rewarded Philoctetes with this same bow for lighting his funeral pyre. Supporting Greengard's argument we could go a step further, focusing, in particular, on the role of fire as a means of salvation and as a token of friendship between mortals, heroes, and gods.

Like Prometheus, who gave the human race the torch of light, Philoctetes produces fire in his loneliness and offers himself the advantages of light within his primitive habitat. Explaining the means of his existence to Neoptolemus he says:

εἶτα πῦρ ἂν οὐ παρῆν,

[462] Prometheus also has close links with Hephaestus.
[463] Greengard (1987, 84 n.47).

ἀλλ' ἐν πέτροισι πέτρον ἐκτρίβων μόλις

ἔφην' ἄφαντον φῶς, ὃ καὶ σῴζει μ' ἀεί.

Then I would have no fire,

but by rubbing stone on stone

I made light appear with difficulty out of darkness.

This, in fact, is ever my salvation.

(*Philoctetes*, 295-7)

The unbearable darkness of Philoctetes' isolated home is made lighter - both literally and symbolically - by the bow of Achilles, which had been inherited by Heracles, which used as a to provide himself with food; burning wood offers him the comfort of warmth during the winter, becoming as a symbol of a 'civilized' life.

The use of fire by Philoctetes, lighting the pyre of Heracles, reveals his moral virtues and his spirit of humanism. In his enduring suffering the 'roofed home with a fire provides everything, except freedom from his sickness' (*οἰκουμένη γὰρ οὖν στέγη πυρὸς μέτα/ πάντ' ἐκπορίζει πλὴν τὸ μὴ νοσεῖν ἐμέ, Philoctetes* 298-9). Philoctetes invokes Neoptolemus as a 'noble-hearted son' and makes a plea to him saying: 'please take and burn me in this fire that men call Lemnian' (*ἀλλὰ συλλαβὼν/ τῷ Λημνίῳ τῷδ' ἀνακαλουμένῳ πυρὶ/ ἔμπρησον, Philoctetes* 799-801). Philoctetes seeks a saviour, even if this kind of release would lead to his death. Philoctetes, as a loyal 'child', satisfies the desires of Heracles, who portrayed as a paternal figure for him. Although he asks the young Neoptolemus to act in the same way, just as he did in the past for his friend Heracles, his wish remains, temporarily, unfulfilled.

The fire, in the chorus' song concerning the hubristic ingratitude of Ixion (*Philoctetes* 676-684), is transformed to a means of punishment.[464] Ixion is bound to a burning solar wheel, and becomes another example of Zeus' wrath against the arrogant mortals. But, despite the extensive similarities between the painful punishments of Prometheus, Ixion, and Philoctetes, their motivations and the morals differ. The chorus admits of Philoctetes that 'he wronged no one, defrauded none of anything' (*ὃς οὔτ' ἔρξας τιν' οὔ τι νοσφίσας, Philoctetes* 684). Nevertheless, Philoctetes experienced an enforced abandonment and faces an imminent unwilling departure to Troy. When Odysseus threatens him that he will use force in order to transport him to the ship, the crippled man invokes 'the almighty flame created by Hephaestus' (*καὶ τὸ παγκρατὲς σέλας/ Ἡφαιστότευκτον*, *Philoctetes* 986-7) as a witness of his sufferings. The story of the arrival of Hephaestus on the island of Lemnos, when Zeus hurled him from the Mt Olympos for taking Hera's side in a quarrel, as we have already mentioned, is another example that might evoke a thematic relationship between isolation and fire in the play.

At the edge of the world, Philoctetes, like an Aeschylean Prometheus, exists 'withered away…alone' (Philoctetes, 954), and in death he 'will provide food for those who once provided food for him, and his former quarry, will prey on him' (*ἀλλ' αὐτὸς τάλας/ θανὼν παρέξω δαῖθ' ὑφ' ὧν ἐφερβόμην/ καί μ' οὓς ἐθήρων πρόσθε θηράσουσι νῦν, Philoctetes* 956-7). He cries, and his suppurating wound will not be healed until someone who hears suppliants, either Zeus (*Ζηνὸς ἱκεσίου*, *Philoctetes*, 484), or a mortal, drops anchor at the shores where 'no wise man arrives' (*οὐκ ἐνθάδ' οἱ πλοῖ τοῖσι σώφροσιν βροτῶν*, *Philoctetes*, 304) and is persuaded to cure his pain as a saviour.

[464] For the Ixion's story see Webster (1970, 111), Schein (2013, 231-2).

Conclusion

Journeys in the sea…Journeys in life…Travelling within the world of the ancient Greek tragedy is always an experience 'full of adventure, full of discovery', like a marvellous voyage to Cavafy's Ithaca. For the seafaring Greeks, sailing was a synonym for gaining knowledge. The sea was not only the natural background setting of ancient Greeks' everyday life, but its vastness, as it expanded beyond the limits of their known world, stimulated their curiosity to explore it. The present study could accordingly be viewed as an attempt, in order to elucidate significant, and as yet uninvestigated, trajectories via the sea, as these are expressed in the dramatic texts of ancient Greek tragedy.

The issues and the approaches raised throughout this study cannot be fully rehearsed in this epilogue. It is, however, alluring to sketch some of the conclusions reached so far in order to delineate an overall picture of the discussion conducted in the previous chapters.

One of the principal aims of this thesis has been to highlight the multi-dimensional dynamics, symbolisms, and interpretations of the sea as an open dramatic field for mortal wanderings in ancient Greek tragedy. Considering that the dramatic action is undeniably determined by its visible or invisible spatial characteristics, it can be suggested that the seascape, despite its absence from the theatrical setting, has a prominent role in the visible sphere of the theatre. This study examines a specific set of plays from the extant corpus of ancient Greek tragedy where the image of the sea acquires a significant role linking the sensible world of everyday life to the imagined world beyond it.

From my scrutiny on the surviving texts discussed in this thesis, it might easily be inferred that sea's multiple transformations, through the imaginary world of the theatre, are closely connected with Greek's understanding of the transformation of life to death, and from death to immortality. Aeschylus' *Persians* provides a striking example of the transformative powers of the sea. The aquatic landscapes become passages of destruction and death for the defeated Persian army. Xerxes' crossing of Hellespont, a gulf devoted to the young maiden Helle after her fatal fall in its waters, evokes nature's alteration, which is the beginning of total disaster for the Persians. The crossing of Hellespont, as well as the desired but unsuccessful crossing of the river Strymon, can be seen as a symbolic reflection of the final *pompe* of the Elders towards the Persian palace, which acquires the characteristics of a funeral procession. It is also implied that these Elders can be seen as the reverse image of the absent young troops, fostering images of the dead Persians' lost potential future. Hence, the final march of the play can be interpreted as a metaphorical homecoming.

The sea as a morbid space of death hosts shipwrecks, secrets, and drowned sailors. The sea, though familiar to the Greeks, preserves the fear of the unknown in many aspects of their life. The soulless bodies the Persian soldiers and the maiden Helle in Aeschylus' *Persians*, as well as the corpse of the young prince Polydorus in Euripides' *Hecuba*, swaying in the sea, preserve a perpetual mobility that differs from the stillness of the tomb and as a result it can be suggested that the sea creates a image of endless travelling as a kind of symbolic immortality.

The sea is a no man's land, and like the Underworld, a place of no return. It can be metamorphosed to become a deadly trap with no chance of escape. The darkness of Hades finds one of its most striking metaphors in the abyss of the sea. In Aeschylus' *Persians* the dead commanders are identified as fishes; children of silence.

Nevertheless, it is suggested that the repeated recitations of the Persian generals, as well as the chorus' invocation to Darius, indirectly and symbolically, succeed in allowing the invisible and imaginary chorus of the 'departed' souls to emerge from Hades.

The sea is transformed into the scenery of the Greeks' destruction, desired by the goddess Athena, as a form of punishment for the Greeks' impiety after their victory at Troy, as expressed in her dialogue with Poseidon in the prologue of Euripides' *Trojan Women*. The sea journey from Troy to Greece can be illustrated as a passage of the Acheron, where the ships of the Greeks, transporting the spoils of victory, become the boats which will lead them to their demise.

Attention is also drawn to certain features of a number of metaphors, which deal with the sea. The realistic and allegorical use of the ship is closely connected to treatments of the sea as an image, which is identified with expansionism, exchange of goods and transportation. The image of the ship is illustrated as a temporary *oikos* for the seafarers. The common motif of the 'ship of state' could be applied to the presence of the intelligent Danaus as the captain of his travelling *polis* in Aeschylus' *Suppliants*. In the same tragedy, it is Pelasgus' decision, which is, metaphorically, presented as a ship, which seeks to find its harbour. The symbolic role of harbours is also extended in order to connote the sea as a well-defined border between different communities.

At the same time, multiple metaphors pertaining to the ship are traced. In many of the Greek tragedies the human body acquires the characteristics of a ship wandering in the sea. In Euripides' *Hecuba* Polymestor imagines his robes as a ship furls its sails with its maritime rigging, while Hecuba in *Trojan Women* describes her body as the vessel of her life.

Light is also shed on wood, as the primary construction material of ships. Wood, indirectly, becomes a way and means of man's ingenuity in dominating nature. The ships transport choruses and characters either to freedom and salvation, or to exile and suffering. The mountain pinewoods are used for the construction of a vessel, which lead its sailors to victories or disasters. Also, wood's transformation, as in the example of the letter-tablet in Euripides' *Iphigenia in Tauris*, provides a lifeline out from difficult moments of despair.

Bearing in mind that the sea is a space of travelling, one can not ignore the semantic role of the seashore as a liminal space, which determines a topographic and symbolic border between sea and land, freedom and captivity, life and death. The argument is focused on the crucial role of the seashore and its quality as a crossing space, which provide the possibility of an imminent journey via the sea. The seashore reflects, in the most appropriate way, the liminal situation of the women who face an imminent departure to exile in Euripides' *Trojan Women*. The conclusion reached provides this kind of transition as a symbolic rite of passage.

The magnetic polarity between *oikos* and *polis* is examined, through another symbolic rite of passage; the Danaids' journey from exotic Egypt to democratic Argos in Aeschylus' *Suppliants*. The sea not only separates the two distant countries but also defines the borders of Pelasgus' authority where the young maidens will finally be incorporated.

The intricate relationships between sea, sanctuary, and salvation are explored through a number of Greek tragedies, in which a sacred space, adjacent to or in close correlation with the sea, plays a distinctive role as means of salvation.

In Aeschylus' *Suppliants*, the seashore as a sacred space can be identified as an intermediate zone between salvation and death. The twelve statues of the assembled gods function as a place of asylum for the Danaids. The young maidens are always under the surveillance of the gods, literally and mentally, and as a result the 'all-seeing motif' provides a significant dramatic element to the evolution of the plot. The manipulative threat of the impending 'contact' between the soulless statues and the Danaids, through an act of suicide, is finally avoided and the Suppliants are incorporated in the Pelasgian land. Important connections can be traced in *Suppliants,* where Aeschylus incorporates into the play, through the imagery techniques, the supernatural figure of the water-nymphs into his poetic structure in order to form an effective archetypal pattern. The arguments highlight various common characteristics between Danaids, Nymphs, and Furies as archetypal agents of colonization, restoration, and purification.

The purifying power of the sea and its role as a sacred and pure environment is the dramatic device that leads to the heroes' escape in Euripides' *Iphigenia in Tauris.* Tracing multiple functions of salvation in the play, the findings suggest that the aspect of rescue, via the frequent echoes of salvation words, is strongly connected with the image of the sea. In both Euripides' *Iphigenia in Tauris* and *Helen* the sea provides the only route to salvation and the existence of a vast number of nautical terms and sea imageries foregrounds the inextricable connection between sea and salvation. The remote and hostile barbaric regions where the action of the plays dramatically takes place, indicates that the sea is the only feasible passage that allows hope of escape and freedom to be fulfilled.

It has been also found that the poetic universe of the tragedies are also defined by a semantic nexus of vivid colours, natural sounds, and silences, which reflect the

emotional status of characters. The sea is often represented as a forest with intricate paths and, hence, an ideal space for games of hiding, hunting, and persecution.

This study also presents how the theatrical setting as a visible space can be associated with the sea, through the presence of a sacred sanctuary, which 'haunts' a number of tragedies. In Euripides' *Andromache* the holy monument of the sea-god Thetis acquires a crucial dramatic tableau providing a visual representation of the sea and salvation. The altar becomes, simultaneously, a 'harbour' of protection and a space of Thetis' temporary glorious 'return' at the end of the play, unifying the world of mortals with the divine. Thetis' sanctuary becomes the centre of a broader dramatic milieu comprised of islands, caves, and mountains, which are defined in audience's imagination as spaces of immortality.

In Euripides' *Helen* the tomb of king Proteus, the mythical wizard of the sea, plays a significant role as a space of Helen's protection and salvation. The tomb transformed to a sacred space of supplication and its position near the shore is the most appropriate site for escape via the sea. The image of the sacred spaces of supplication as islands can be justified not only by its representations as harbours in the storm, but also as the dramatic centre in a nexus of sea trajectories during the plays.

Nevertheless, the only extant tragedy, where the setting represents an isolated island, is Sophocles' *Philoctetes*. In the centre of the Athenian *polis*, the theatrical setting becomes a faraway and unpopulated island, which offers an appropriate stage of *agon* among compatriots and a field of negotiations, persuasion, and compromise. Many associations and connections are also traced, between *oikos* and *polis,* primitivism and civilization, suffering and salvation. The island-setting of *Philoctetes* and the wooden seats from which the spectators project themselves in the fictional world of the play,

enhance the illusion of the experience of a theatrical journey in the sea, as a part of their adventurous journey in life.

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